

A woman with dark hair styled in a high ponytail, wearing a black sleeveless dress and black high-heeled sandals, is posing against the side of a dark, weathered vintage trailer. She is leaning against the trailer with one leg raised and resting on the side. The background shows a clear blue sky and a dirt ground.

DYNAMIC POSING GUIDE

MODERN TECHNIQUES
FOR DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHERS

CRAIG STIDHAM
JEANNE HARRIS

WILEY

Dynamic Posing Guide

Modern Techniques for Digital Photographers

Craig Stidham

with Jeanne Harris

Dynamic Posing Guide: Modern Techniques for Digital Photographers

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To my kiddos: If you keep God in your heart and put your mind to something, anything is possible. —CS

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Introduction

Photography is an art, and just like any form of art, it is a medium for expression. How well photographs create an expression or tell a story depends on how well that expression is communicated. Photography is essentially a means of visual communication. Cameras are used for anything from documentation to creating imaginative forms of art. In this book I focus on the more creative yet tactical form of photographic art through the mechanism of posing.

A lot of photographers have asked me, “My clients and models tell me they don’t want to look posed. How do I work around this?” I answer, “The reason they come to you is because they haven’t yet found a pose in which they look good.” Even professional models are posing. Anything you do with humans is a pose. That’s just a fact. Your goal as a professional photographer is to create a dynamic and expressive pose that makes your models look good in the final image, and thus look “not posed!” That is the goal of this book.

It might seem like I am the master at stating the obvious, but there is a method to this madness and actual theory and reasoning behind why we pose. Paraphrasing the dictionary, the definition of “to pose” is to assume a particular attitude or stance, especially with the hope of impressing others or to assume or hold a physical attitude for an artistic purpose. For the purposes of this book, I am going to hold to the definition of the later, “to assume or hold a physical attitude for an artistic purpose.” This is my mantra.

Throughout the chapters of this book, I present practical information, tips, diagrams, and photographs that depict the basics of posing, geared toward fashion photography. I have laid out this book so that it follows the workflow and process of thinking through and then executing the shot. The basic fundamentals of photography have not changed; many of the skills that are common in other fields of photography still remain. However, in fashion we tend to bend or break rules. And that’s where we get to have fun!

I begin by breaking down the human body and discuss why and how to move the body in certain ways to achieve a particular attitude or look in your photographs. From there, I discuss why we pose, and the basic rules of posing. Then comes the down-and-dirty part, where I dive into the nuts and bolts of putting your posing shots to work in different scenarios, and break down the equipment essentials you’ll need, as well. Finally, after learning the rules, I show you when and how you can break them. You’ll see many “behind the scenes” shots for a more thorough understanding. When you understand these basics and formulas, you will be shooting amazing, high-glamour, and high-selling shots in no time!

I would love for you to red-pen, make notes, and flag the pages of this book as you move from the technical to the artistic aspects of fashion photography. It not only is my hope that you gain valuable information from it and enjoy the contents, but also that by reading this book you become a more highly-skilled fashion or portrait photographer who visualizes and grasps that balance of technique and artistic story telling.



CHAPTER 1: Breaking Down the Human Figure

Let's look at the human body and break it down. At first glance, though we might each focus on different aspects, the average person tends to look at the body as one unit. But as photographers and artists, it's essential for us to concentrate on the components that make, move, and create form within the human body. You need to think of yourself more as a sculptor or architect. From that perspective, for the purposes of posing, the primary parts of the human body on which you need to focus are the skeletal and muscular system. You must understand these elements and how they work or you will never master your craft. After understanding how the skeletal and muscular systems work together, next you need to focus on the joints and weight to learn how they work in conjunction with these two primary elements.

And here you thought that anatomy class would have nothing to do with photography!

You want to pose and move your models in specific ways to portray a certain attitude. To achieve this, you have to take into account that you are operating three major body components: bones, muscles, and joints. Posing isn't just about moving an arm or leg here or there—you need to understand *why* you want to move that arm or leg.

By following some fundamental rules of the human figure, in this chapter I will explain how and why we move specific parts of the body in particular ways by activating or deactivating certain muscles, all toward the goal of either centering the weight or pushing it away.

The Human Figure as a Diagram

Because photography is a two-dimensional medium, one fundamental rule would seem to be that the closer an object is to the lens, the bigger it appears, right? Thus, the logic then follows that the farther away from the lens the object is, the smaller it appears.

A general rule of thumb, as shown in Figure 1.1, is you want to present men most often facing straight to the camera, which gives the illusion of being bigger, broader, and more statuesque. Whereas with women, you want to drop all the weight and make them look thin like a pencil. You achieve this by positioning their bodies at an angle and pushing their weight away from the camera. You don't want to capture images that make your female models look big or heavy, so you want to avoid posing them straight to the camera. I'll show you how to never hear "I look fat in that photo" again.



Figure 1.1

After years of teaching posing, I had an epiphany and came up with the diagrams shown in Figure 1.2. These diagrams are the simplest way to dissect the human body and use it for your modeling purposes. The block circle represents the head; the first upside-down diamond triangle represents the shoulders to the belly button; the diamond below that represents the belly button to the waist; and the elongated triangle represents the waist down to the feet.

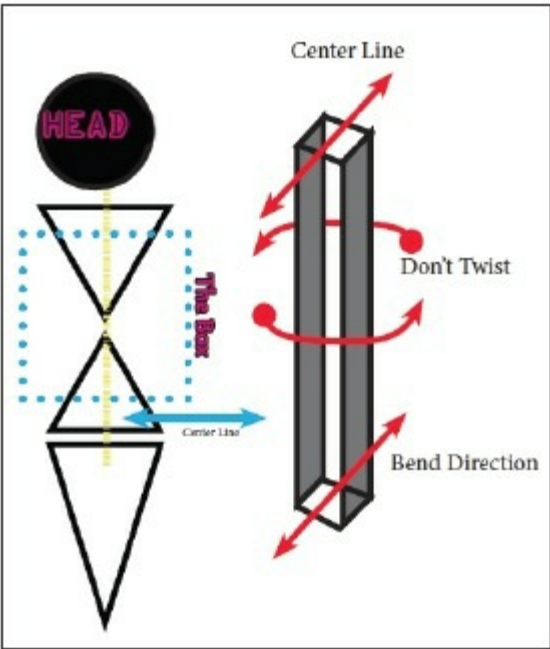
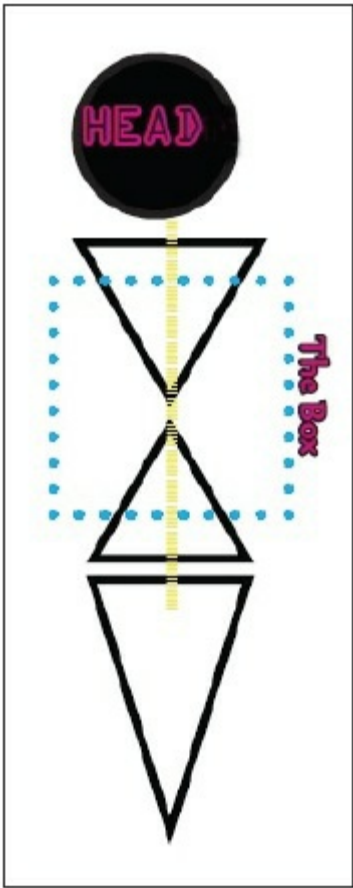


Figure 1.2

Notice the yellow line drawn directly down the middle of all three triangles. That line represents the spinal column. Next, locate the dotted-blue box. This represents the chest area, which includes everything from the clavicle bone to the belly button—an area I refer to as *The Box*. I always tell people, “rule number one is Don’t block The Box.” What that means is, do not put the model’s arms or hands inside that region. It adds weight and usually looks awkward or just plain bad. Of course, there are exceptions, which I’ll go over later, but when starting out, keep this rule in mind.

With the yellow line representing the spinal column, the easiest way to envision the spinal column, which, as just mentioned, is represented by the yellow line, is as a 2×4 . You can bend a 2×4 , but you can never twist it. Likewise, you can move your spinal column forward or backward by bending

it; however, you don't ever want to twist it. By twisting it, you might cause wrinkles and bulges in the muscles and the skin, notably around the rib cage, which not only is unattractive, but also it can crumple the material of the clothing.

Look at the blonde model in the black shirt shown in Figure 1.3 and note the center yellow line. When a model is posing, you want to treat the center line like a solid object. Observe how I didn't twist the line, which would have wrinkled her clothing or skin. The center line can bend; however, that line should almost always bend along the spinal column, as it naturally bends.



Figure 1.3

Now, look at the blue outline I drew in Figure 1.4. You can see that “hourglass” shape you want to strive for when shooting women. In the image, you can see where the triangles are placed. Also note the placement of her hands. Here's where not blocking The Box comes in. If you don't block The Box, you will be forced to relocate the arms and hands. It also opens her body up and shows off her clothing.



Figure 1.4

With all the fashion marketing that our clients are exposed to, their brains are subconsciously picking up on these basic posing guidelines. The bad news is that we as portrait and fashion photographers are required to shoot in this manor with models who are sometimes not actual models; often, they are average people. This means coping with variations of height, weight, and lack of real modeling experience and necessitates you keeping a sharper eye on your details.

Old-School Rules



Figure 1.5

Let's take a few moments and review some really old-school photography rules that have been

passed down through time. Most of these rules were developed in the 1950s, and they are still used today in the fashion industry. These are the rules that most art directors don't want you to break at least 75 percent of the time, but of course, some rules are meant to be broken. However, this particular set of five rules are those that you'll want to adhere to most of the time:

Rule #1: Never cut a joint. If God made the human body to bend in that particular area, don't crop it or cut it out of the photograph. For example, don't cut someone off at the knees or elbow.

Rule #2: Shift weight away from the camera. The idea is to take the model's weight, or mass, and push it away from your lens. We do this, again, because any object that moves away from the camera appears to be smaller than an object smack dab in front of the camera. If you push that weight forward—or closer to the camera—all you're going to do is emphasize it and make it bigger. By taking that weight and pushing it away from the camera, you do the opposite. You will thin it out and make it appear smaller.

Rule #3: Don't forget to show off the clothing. If the eyes of the model are looking straight to the camera, this humanizes the model, creating a connection with the viewer. After connecting to the model, it's in the viewer's nature to next look at the clothing and the styling. That's where you're going to get your "wow" factor. Clothing is critical in posing because when you show everything off, the wow factor is going to come together.

Rule #4: Give all images life. If you don't have life in your image or aren't expressing a mood in the model, what's the point? It's essential to express mood and feeling in your photographs.

Rule #5: Think thin, thin, thin! After all, it's the fashion industry. Even if you're just taking a friend's portrait, you are never going to have one person come up to you and say, "Can you make me look fat?" It's never once happened to me. So remember, the whole point is to thin, thin, and thin your subjects as much as possible.

Head to Toe

It's time to take a look at the human body from head to toe. In this section, I will concentrate on each part of the human form and show you how to pose each section to achieve your desired look.

Head and Eyes

The most important factor of the head that you want to keep in mind is that it is its own joint. We start at the jaw line and move up. It can move left, right, up, and down. But, what you are most concerned about are the eyes. If the head turns too far to one side, as demonstrated in Figure 1.6, and the model then looks back toward the center where the camera would be, her eyes end up buried in the corners of her eye sockets. Doing so makes her eyeballs somewhat disappear or what I call causing the eyes to be "stressed."



Figure 1.6

To prevent that from happening, you want to bring the head around toward the camera to a three-fourths view or a front-on view, as illustrated in Figure 1.7, so the eyes don't become lost in the sockets. By allowing the chin to draw down slightly also permits light into the eyes, as well. Your goal is to get the angle of the light going into the eyes equal to the angle of the light going out of the eyes. This does two things: first, it eliminates red eye, and second, the color of the eyes are vibrant in the image. You can see in my work, shown in Figure 1.8, I'm really into the eyes, and this is how I get that done.



Figure 1.7



Figure 1.8

Also, especially for women, you want to position the chin down slightly, but not too much; you want to be sure to avoid creating “jowls” beneath the chin. This, of course, is not attractive and the best way I have found to get rid of those is to pull the head forward a little bit, which will tighten up the skin in that area, as is revealed in Figure 1.9.



Figure 1.9

Shoulders

The shoulders are always a nice feature, but you just don’t want to pull them back by any means—

ever. By pulling the shoulders back, this pushes the chest forward, thus making you a photographer who shoots for magazines wrapped in black plastic! That's not something we're here to do either. What we are most concerned about is the clavicle, otherwise known as the collarbone. The collarbone is the only bone in the human body that is not actually attached to another bone. It is held in place by muscles alone. By pushing the shoulders back, as shown in Figure 1.10, the muscles along the pectoral and clavicle area are pulled really tight, which makes the clavicle stick out below the model's neck. This also gives the model a robotic look, which isn't appealing or feminine. This is what *not* to do. If you see the collarbone sticking out, that's your cue to have the model relax her shoulders.



Figure 1.10

By relaxing the shoulders slightly and letting them rest naturally, the collarbone can also relax, pulling inward. Just by doing that one simple move, you start to see a nicer shape and softer look to the model's body, as demonstrated in Figure 1.11.



Figure 1.11

When working with both the shoulders and clavicle, you always want them to come forward, such as how they are in the two examples in Figure 1.12. Bringing them forward gives you that nice, feminine shape, and by bringing them *really* far forward, you get that extreme vogue beauty look that's so evident in the photo on the bottom. Figure 1.13 illustrates more examples of posing the shoulders.



Figure 1.12



Figure 1.13

In Figure 1.14, look at the shoulder farthest from the camera and notice the neck muscles down to the shoulder muscles and then across to the collarbone. You'll notice that if the model pulls her arm back too much, this arm ends up being blocked by the torso and disappears right about where her chest is located. When the shoulder disappears behind her chest, it results in having her shoulder stick out in that corner. This is what I like to call the *chicken nugget*, which simply looks odd.

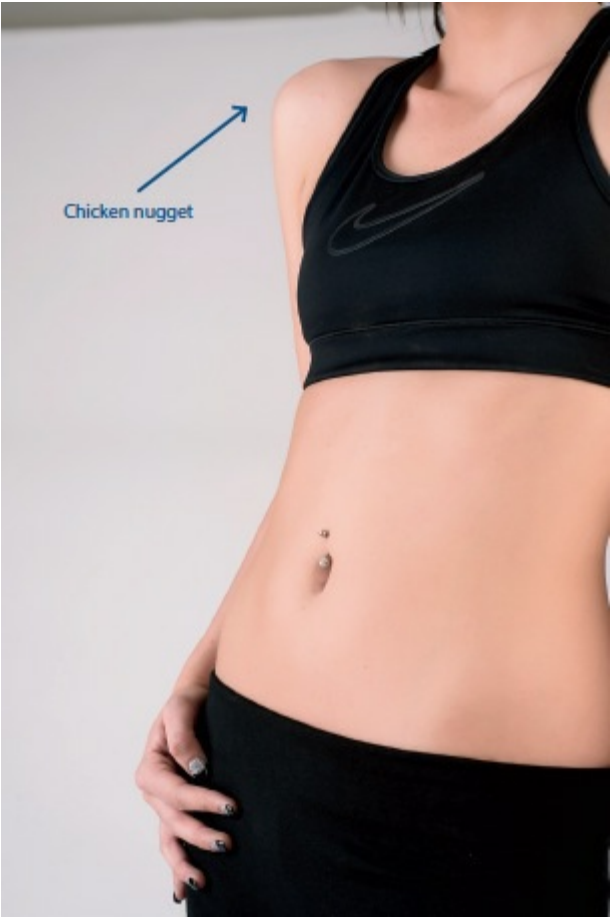


Figure 1.14

By moving the model's hand slightly down the hip bone, as I did in Figure 1.15, you can see that it begins to reduce the amount that the chicken nugget protrudes out; however, the bicep is still hidden behind the chest, so it's still not enough.



Figure 1.15

What you want to do is to relax the hand more, making sure the shoulders are relaxed, and pull the elbow back just slightly so that some of her arm lies on the side of her body. Notice in Figure 1.16 how her shoulder naturally relaxes and isn't "popping out" in the corner. The chicken nugget is gone and you see her bicep and full arm. This is a really good rule for fashion photographers to keep in mind. Remember to look for the chicken nugget!

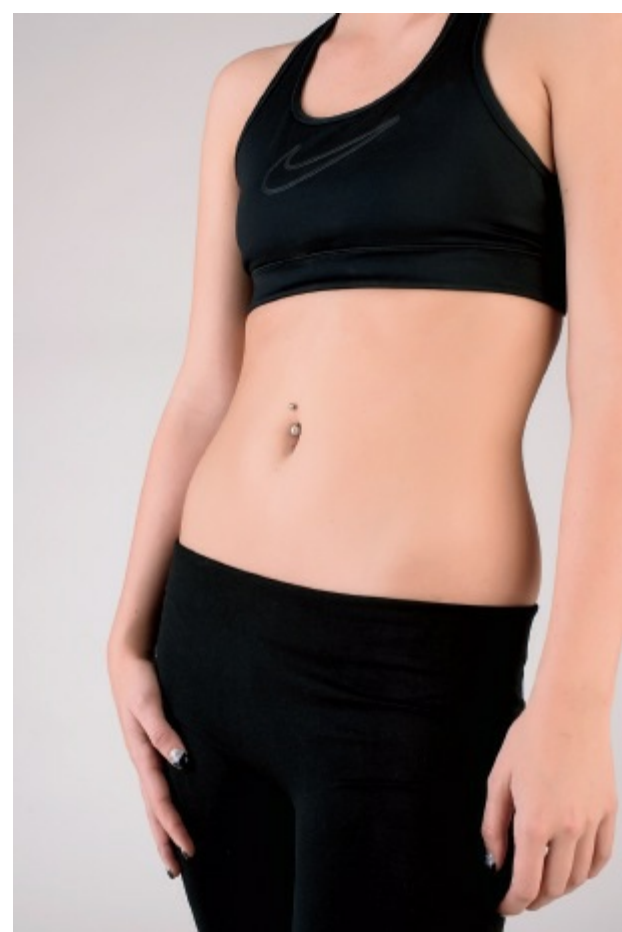


Figure 1.16



Figure 1.17

Torso

As noted earlier in this chapter, when it comes to women, there is a part of the body you usually never want to shoot square to the camera, and that's the abdominal area from the belly button to the clavicle. (see Figure 1.18.) Make sure you get some sort of a 40- to 45-degree angle from her center line to the camera, as exhibited in Figure 1.19. This gives the body shape and dimension. Remember, photography is a two-dimensional representation. By angling the model's body and placing one shoulder closer to the camera and the other shoulder farther away from it, you are giving the body depth and thinning your model, as well. However, you need to be careful when angling that you don't overdo it or other problems may arise.



Figure 1.18



Figure 1.19



Figure 1.20



Figure 1.21

Hips and Waist

As I demonstrated earlier in the diagrams in Figure 1.2, the center of the clavicle to the belly button is considered the model's center line, which runs along the spinal column. Again, it's critical to remember that you can bend a center line forward or backward, just as the spine naturally bends, but you do not ever *twist* the center line. Figure 1.22 illustrates how if you twist the model's shoulders to the left and leave her belly button alone on the right side of her body, her skin is going to twist, wrinkle, and look unsightly. If she were wearing a bikini and not naturally thin, this wouldn't look too attractive. But, even if she's wearing a normal shirt, you're causing the material to roll and wrinkle. Just as with wrinkled skin, this not only looks bad, but it's also not desirable if you're trying to sell that article of clothing for a client. So, remember, you can bend, but *never* twist the center line.



Figure 1.22

The hip region occupies the area a little bit lower than the belly button, right about on the pelvic bone. Here is the point at which you can shift the weight of the model from one side or the other. After shifting the weight away from the camera, have your model lean back slightly, along the spinal column, as demonstrated in Figure 1.23. This allows the abdominal muscles and the muscles that run down the pelvic bone to be accentuated.

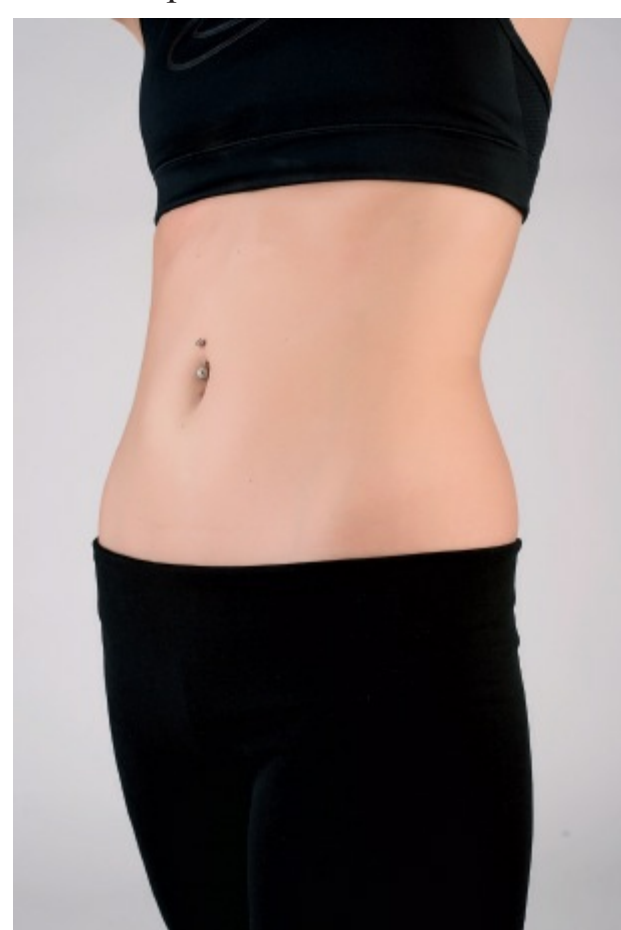


Figure 1.23



Figure 1.24



Figure 1.25



Figure 1.26

Hands

Everyone wants to know what to do about hands. In fact, hands are pretty simple to work with, but there are some basic do's and don'ts that you want to consider when it comes to posing them.

In the images presented in Figure 1.27, our model is doing what I like to call *cheerleader hands*. You don't want to do this because first, her hands are slightly blocking The Box, and second, they are blocking the small of her back and her hips, which doesn't showcase the frame lines of her body. Additionally, by placing her hand on her hip, she's pressing the skin and the clothing out, which is going to wrinkle the clothes and magnify her rear end.





Figure 1.27

What you want to do is determine the location of the hip bone, place her hand just below it, and then rotate her hip back just slightly so that the fingers rest where her back pocket would be located, as shown in Figure 1.28.



Figure 1.28

By placing her hands on the back pocket area in this manner, you can now see the entire outline and curvature of her body. You get a nice, solid, uninterrupted line all the way down from her clavicle, down through her chest on the camera-left side of her body, as demonstrated in Figure 1.29. On the side closest to the camera—camera-right—you get the rounding dimension of her body and the appealing curvature of that line. There isn't any sort of obstruction such as cheerleader hands or anything that might add weight.



Figure 1.29

The hand in camera-right portrayed in Figure 1.30 indicates what *not* to do. If the hand is hanging down toward her waist, ensure that the model is not showing the back of her hand or has her thumb and fingers close together or closed tightly. If the thumb is pressed up against the forefinger and you can't see through it, you'll end up making the hand look fat. Another of my rules is to never show the back of the hand if possible; it just doesn't come across as an attractive feature on film.



Figure 1.30: Incorrect hand placement

Figure 1.31 shows that what you want to do is to point the thumb toward the camera and then open it up away from the forefinger. Next, bend the wrist inward, just a tad, while dropping the fingers. This reveals that dead space between her thumb and forefinger.



Figure 1.31: Correct hand placement

You can vary this depending on the style of your image or formality of the dress. If it's a wedding or prom dress, you'll want to bend the wrist two degrees and pop it out away from the body so that the fingers go away from the body. However, if the subject is wearing a little black dress, you might also want to break the wrist in toward the body, with the fingers pointed in, as to subliminally point the viewer's eye toward the curvature of her derriere. Figures 1.32 and 1.33 illustrate some examples.



Figure 1.32



Figure 1.33

Another nice way to pose the hand is to start off in the correct hanging-down position. Next, rotate it all the way up to the collarbone and place the pads of her hands on her collarbone, such as is illustrated in Figure 1.34.



Figure 1.34

It's important not to tuck the thumb up underneath the hand, because then you're either going to have a warped hand or a fat hand, and we don't want either. Next, break that wrist dramatically inward toward the clavicle so that the index finger is pointing toward the shoulder. Instruct your model to bend her fingers slightly and then lift the little finger up just a bit. You will shoot through the pinky, and as you do so, you will see some dead space before you hit the thumb. This makes that hand look a lot classier. Next, have your model use her center line and lean back slightly.

Avoid having your model simply place her hand up on her clavicle and make a fist in the manner illustrated in Figure 1.35. This is what the pros call just lazy! Doing this shows the back of the hand, and by making a fist, it forces the veins and tendons to stick out, which as stated earlier, is unattractive and awkward. Another aspect of the hand with regard to photography that you should keep in mind is that the palm is not considered attractive. So, don't show that if at all possible either.



Figure 1.35

If your image requires a pose that does involve the palm, again, ensure that you’re shooting into the curvature of the hand, and open up the fingers from the thumb, as depicted in Figure 1.36.

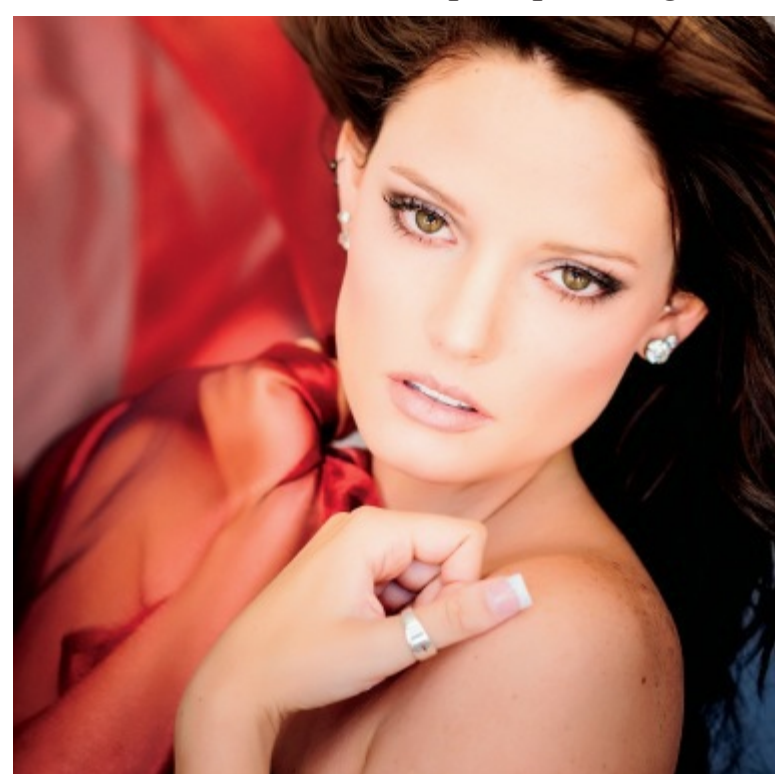


Figure 1.36

Knees

Knees serve two important functions: First, they add shape to your model, and second, they help the clothing drape nicely and look appealing. If the model is wearing a long dress, the knees help to give her an hour glass shape (see Figure 1.37). After posing her in the basic “T”-stance (which I discuss how to do in Chapter 2), push the front knee out, ever-so-slightly. This works especially well for a

formal or wedding dress. The clothing now hangs nicely off her knee, imparting a flattering and elegant shape to the dress, which will please the designer, as well.



Figure 1.37

If your model is wearing pants and she is sitting, you have two options available, depending on the mood you're trying to achieve. If you are striving for more of a harder look with some attitude, have the model separate the knees to more of a masculine stance, as Figure 1.38 demonstrates. This pose shows off the heels while still giving her that edgy aura you're after.



Figure 1.38

If you're going for a softer look, direct your model to position her legs so that the knees are touching, with one slightly lower than the other, and the feet separated (see Figure 1.39). This will keep the pants, skirt, or dress tight without the viewer looking up the skirt, and most important, it shows off the heels nicely.



Figure 1.39

Feet

Usually, you want to separate feet to create a more dynamic, interesting photograph. You want movement in your feet. You don't want the knees, legs, and feet stuck together. If the knees are together, separate the feet. And if you think this only applies to professional models, hey, even the Queen of England tucks one ankle behind the other!

When shooting and featuring shoes, you want to ensure that one foot is aimed toward the camera, revealing the detail inside the toe box, and the other foot is aimed slightly off center from the camera so that you can see the side and heel of the shoe. Most shoe designers expend most of their effort and money producing the toe box and the heel, and they won't like it one bit if you cut that off. Figure 1.40 illustrates an example of how not to pose feet. In this example the model's feet are aimed directly at the camera, hiding the side of the shoe.



Figure 1.40

In Figure 1.41, one foot is turned sideways and the other is straight toward the camera. If you are shooting for a shoe designer you want to make sure that you can see the front toe box and the front lip of one shoe and the side profile and heel of the other shoe. Be sure there is a gap between the shoes. If you're looking at her camera-left foot, down by the heel, you'll see where the skin has been creased right above the shoe strap. That's because her weight is distributed equally on both feet. This is close to what we want but still not the best.



Figure 1.41

Figure 1.42 is the hero image. We have the same setup with the clear view of her shoe strap; however, now we pick her camera-left foot up on her tippy toe. This not only helps with her hips and alleviates weight, but her feet also look more elegant. The camera-right foot that is square to camera is the foot holding all of her weight, but that fact is hidden by the two dimensions of the camera.



Figure 1.42



Figure 1.43



Figure 1.44



CHAPTER 2: Rules of Posing

Why do fashion photographers pose their models? If we stick to the definition of posing—to assume or hold a position, posture, and attitude for an artistic purpose—the answer is simple: we pose our models for the clothing. The clothing that the model is wearing is what tells the story, gives us our attitude, and tells us artistically why we are posing the model a certain way. If your model is wearing a wedding dress, for example, you will want a more formal pose to show off the features and details of the dress. If your model is wearing ripped jeans, a concert t-shirt, and a leather jacket, perhaps your pose would be more along the lines of, say, a rock star or a biker. Why and how we pose the way we do is directly correlated to the clothing the model is wearing. For fashion photography, we pose to make the model appear thinner and then to highlight the apparel. Remember, it's our job to sell the clothes, shoes, and/or accessories that the models are wearing.

Stacking

One of your goals as photographers is to thin your models as much as possible. Because photography is a two-dimensional medium, the way to accomplish this goal is to create depth and the perception of three dimensions in our pictures. This can be done by utilizing a posing technique known as the *T-stance* and a technique that hails back to the Art Deco era known as *stacking*. It is essential you understand these two concepts, because in fashion photography, they are the equivalent to the gasoline in your car: Without it, you aren't going anywhere and neither are your photographs!

Stacking is posing a standing model so that the viewer only sees one leg. It is the starting point for the T-stance. The stacked pose is mostly used for commercial poses and for formal dresses. The reason for this is because the stacked pose makes the dress look its best and gives the perception of that timeless female hourglass figure. Figure 2.1 illustrates correct stacking; Figure 2.2 illustrates incorrect stacking, in which both of the model's legs are visible.

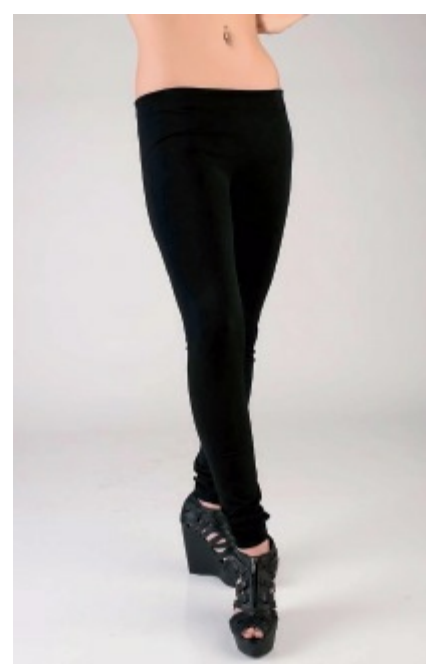




Figure 2.1: Correct stacking



Figure 2.2: Incorrect stacking



Figure 2.3

The T-Stance

The T-stance positions the model in a natural 45-degree angle to the camera and completes the goal of stacking. The following list describes how to achieve the T-stance, which is demonstrated in Figure 2.4.



Figure 2.4

1. Start by positing the feet, one foot in front of the other (see Figure 2.5).

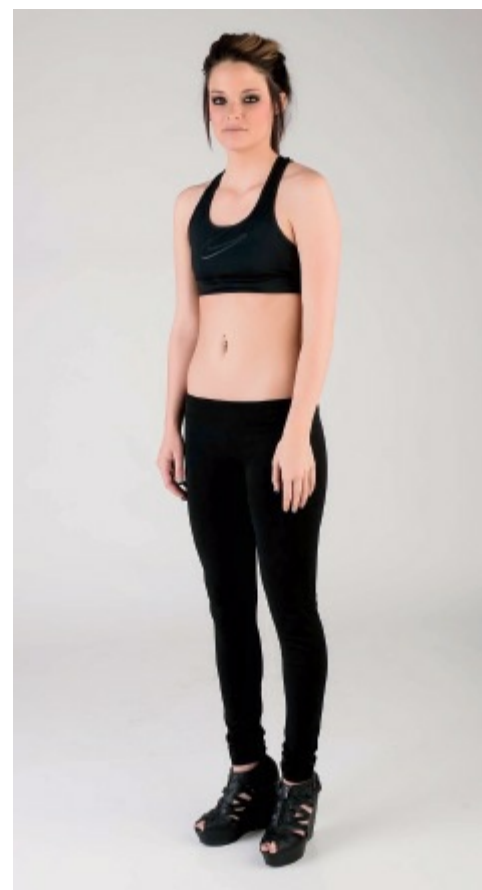


Figure 2.5

2. Place the back foot at a 90-degree, horizontal angle to the camera so that you see both the heel and the side of the toe box. Be sure to get at least one hand's width between the back foot and the front foot to ensure that the model can keep her balance, especially if she is wearing heels.
3. Position the model's front foot straight toward the camera and line up her Achilles tendon with the first joint of her big toe on her rear foot, as illustrated in Figure 2.6. This makes her feet look as if they are making the letter "T"; thus, the reason why this position is called the "T"-stance.

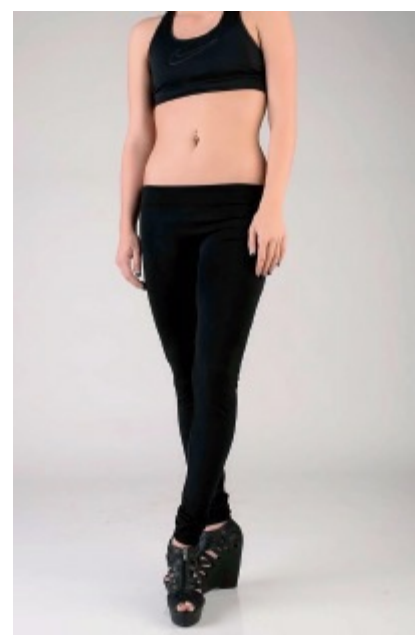




Figure 2.6: Correct feet and leg placement

4. Turn the model's hips, waist, and chest at a 40-degree angle to the camera.
 5. Push the front pelvis bone back about 2 degrees on the center line and bend it back slightly. This moves the model's weight away from the camera and allows us to see the curvature of her bottom, the small of her back, her hip bone, and the space between. By doing this, we are creating the illusion that the model is even more trim and shapely than she may be already. In addition, shooting into the model's front leg hides the back leg completely from the camera, which satisfies the stacking requirement and gives your image depth.
 6. Because your model is typically in heels, you want to bend the front knee just a little. This way, if the garment she's wearing flows down her body, such as a long dress, it will hang off of her knee nicely, creating a flattering and elegant shape to the dress.
- This is your standard T-stance starting point. As soon as you get behind the camera and you start looking at the pose through the frame, you can move the model's front foot slowly forward or back so that the front foot totally hides the back foot in position.

Hand Placement

Chapter 1 covers hand placement in great detail, but here's a quick synopsis of it in conjunction with the T-stance.

1. Place the model's hand closest to the camera on the front of her hip with her fingers pointing down.
 2. Bend the other arm slightly and let it hang down the side of her thigh.
- Remember to angle the thumb at the camera so that you can see a bit of space between the thumb and forefingers. Ideally, you also want space between the thumb and the side of the leg.
3. Position the hand closest to the camera more-or-less where the model's back pocket would be. This will give you a little peek-a-boo diamond between her armpit, elbow, and hand while also revealing the small of her back. By allowing that little bit of a gap, you've moved the arm out of the way, which again drops weight a great deal.
 4. Pull the elbow of the arm farthest from the camera back slightly and let the hand rest toward the front. This shows the viewer that she indeed has two hands, which is important (you don't want to

cut off any limbs). This also fulfills your stacking requirement, even though technically the elbow is hidden by the torso. This enables the viewer to see straight across her stomach, which continues to reduce weight.

5. We could also open up the chest just a tad toward the camera, giving us more depth and dimension of the body. Then, bring the face back around toward the camera.
6. After placing the model's legs into the T-stance, take her camera-left arm and tuck it behind her waist slightly so you still see her arm. Then, place her hand below her hip bone. Turn her chest camera-left. This creates a nice line on the camera-right side of her body.
7. On the camera-right side of the model's body, pull her shoulder back somewhat, roll her thumb into the camera, and move her arm back slightly away from the camera. This creates a gap between her body and her arm and allows the viewer to see the entire body line on her right side.

This outlines a basic T-stance, from which most fashion poses are derived. The images shown in Figures 2.7 and 2.8 illustrate correct hand placement.





Figure 2.7





Figure 2.8

The “Sell” Stance

One of the best things about the T-stance is that the hand closest to the camera is considered your product hand. So, if you were trying to sell a mobile phone case, for instance, the model would hold the case and move it closer to the camera. Of course, this would make that object bigger in the camera’s lens and would be considered what we call a *sell* stance. Thus, the arm of the model that’s closest to the camera is the one would use to sell a product. You use the hand farthest from the camera to frame and enhance her body, balancing out the image. Figures 2.9 and 2.10 illustrate examples of the sell stance.



Figure 2.9



Figure 2.10

If you are doing a simple portrait, the model could drop her back hand straight down or pull it back and grab the back of her heel. You can play with the front hand artistically, depending on the mood

you want to depict. The main takeaway here is that no matter which direction the front arm moves, the shoulders and clavicle are still coming forward and not backward. This makes it possible for you to see the small of her back as well as the side of her body and the chest area, conveying three dimensions.

T-Stance for Formal Wear

The T-stance was created primarily for modeling formal wear, be it a prom or wedding dress or any other kind of formal dress. The T-stance is definitely the best way to pose your model to show off this type of attire. This pose makes it possible for the viewer to see two sides of the dress, imparting a three-dimensional appearance to a two-dimensional image.

When shooting a wedding dress, it's important to keep in mind that the main design and any beadwork often traverses a woman's chest and flows down to roughly the belly button. Because most wedding dresses are strapless, and the bride doesn't want to interfere with the design work near the chest, a lot of brides do not have them altered correctly across their torsos.

Unfortunately, this often creates the inelegant look of armpit fat bulging out the side of the dress. By allowing the back arm to hang down while pushing the elbow back slightly and moving the torso back about 2 degrees, you are simultaneously pulling those pectoral and clavicle muscles back tight, which eliminates any armpit fat. Likewise, keeping the hips and waist turned toward the camera reveals the full design of the dress and any pleats will be tightened up, right about at the model's knees. The dress will then come off the knee and hang straight down. This will lend the body a nice line and silhouette under the dress. You want to highlight the bone structures under the dress, not have the model look like a creampuff!

If the dress comes off the knee, you want it to hit right about where the toes of the model's shoes are located. If the dress is long enough that it comes in contact with the ground and her shoe is being covered by it, she will look as though she's floating, which you want to avoid. Therefore, you need to ensure that the dress is hemmed properly so that it does not completely hide the front shoe. This gives the model a foundation upon which she's standing and not looking as though she were mystically hanging in the air.

Tried-and-True Posing Rules

If a clothing or shoe designer puts his or her heart, soul, time, and talent into designing something, you as a photographer need to take your heart, soul, time, and photographic talent and incorporate it into the vision of the designer. The following sections present some tried-and-true posing techniques that I've used for years that have proven to result in great photographs.

Rule 1: Make Women Appear Thin

When posing female models, the mission is always skinny, skinny, skinny. You never want your models to look big—and they certainly don't want to, either. You want to “skinny” everything. If you've been reading along from the beginning of the book, you know that the most obvious way to thin out your subjects is to move all weight away from the camera, right? From all the workshops I've either attended or given, and from everything I've ever learned throughout my career, everybody stresses to pull weight away from the camera to make the subjects appear thinner. Well, though that is the general rule, as I have previously stated, that's not always true. Here's an example of when and

how you can slightly break this rule to get your subjects to appear thin.

The models depicted in this book are professional, so their hips tend to be skinnier than typical people. Their hips are often shaped more like a speedboat with two pointed ends; this simply is their body type. The side of the left hip bone to the side of the right hip bone more-or-less forms an oval. If you put the weight of a person built like this toward the camera and direct their belly button straight toward the camera, then yes, they too will look bigger. But, if you aim the corner of one side of the model's hip bone toward the camera and all that weight is shifted to that corner of the hip bone, you'll be shooting into the oval, which will cause your model to appear thinner. Everyone assumes 99.9 percent of the time that you must put your weight away from camera and that's not always the case. If you have a slender model with hips shaped like a speedboat, you can cheat this rule.

Rule 2: Pose to Capture the Correct Mood of the Clothing

As fashion photographers, we need to show off the clothing, but more important, we need to convey the inherent attitude or feeling the designer envisioned when he or she conceived the clothing or shoes. Each photograph tells a story, and the mood of the clothing or shoes you are photographing dictates the direction you take. Using the example of ripped jeans and leather jacket, obviously these pieces of apparel evoke a more aggressive tone or a rock-n-roll, free style and mood. You're not going to take a model dressed in the ripped jeans and leather jacket and lay her down on her stomach in a field of daisies, cross her ankles behind her, and prop her chin up under her hands with a cutesy, demure pose. That would look ridiculous! So, the clothing unites with the mood to give you the style and direction of your photograph.

Rule 3: Show the Heel and Toe Box

A big pet peeve of mine is fashion photographers who do not shoot the toe box and heel correctly when their sessions are supposed to feature shoes. If you don't shoot the toe box and heel correctly, or if you just shoot the toe box by having both feet aimed straight toward the camera, you are cutting off half of that designer's vision of the shoe. You'll lose your job if you don't show this correctly! One shoe always needs to show the side profile to highlight the heel, and the other needs to show the toe box and what the front of the shoe looks like. You can see this demonstrated in Figure 2.11. Anytime you can separate the feet, do so. If you are going to bring the feet together or bring one foot behind the other, you need to be able to see two sides, or dimensions, of the shoe at all times.



Figure 2.11

Rule 4: Don't Be Stagnant

Designers typically design outfits with the intention that they move a certain way as someone walks down the street, so you want to create that movement in your photographs (see Figure 2.12). For instance, the classic little black dress is made to show off the form of the body, whereas a springtime dress is looser on the top and made to flow and move side to side as the person wearing it walks. If your model is active and can move a few steps left or right where she can get movement in her outfit, you will leave the designer feeling very satisfied. Don't just position your model in one place and simply have her stand there moving her head and hands. Don't be so stagnant. And, when your planning your photo shoot, choose locations in which your model can move left or right.



Figure 2.12

Breakdown of a Photo Shoot

Let's take a moment to walkthrough the steps of a typical photo shoot that you'll want to follow when posing your models for efficiency and best results. Of course, you will find that you might need to tweak this outline if the light changes or if you are shooting outdoors. Because most of the time you will be shooting women, this breakdown is catered to that reality. Hopefully, men will not take offense, but the same rules generally apply.

Usually a planning meeting is conducted before the shoot and before the hair stylist and makeup artist get a hold of your model. The model typically shows up dressed down in sweats or other comfortable clothes, and you will want to run through the planning meeting and do initial set up while she's in her casual attire. (By the way, it's a very good idea for the model to come dressed casually like this. Impressions on the skin from undergarments are avoided, and you won't have to waste time waiting for those marks to disappear.) If you are lucky and get to see the model a few days before the shoot, you can conduct the planning meeting and fitting session then.



Figure 2.13

To start, I have the model wearing flats; I don't worry about heels unless I'm working with a long, elegant dress and I want to ensure that the dress is hemmed correctly. This way I don't have to worry about taking the dress up at the last minute and whether the shoes are appropriate for the outfit. Most of the time I have the model stay in flats and have her hold the dress up so that I can get an idea of how high my lighting needs to be. I usually use my own body to measure lighting. During the planning session you're not going to go so far as to build your entire set then and there. There can be many reasons for this; for instance, if the planning meeting is on Friday but your actual shoot is two weeks later, you will likely have other jobs in between so you can't set it up for that particular job. I usually keep a little scratch pad with me and I just stand up close to the model and use my own body height to judge the distance and lighting. I simply make note if she's the same height as me or taller, and if so, by how much.

Next, I conduct a short meeting with the art director and the rest of the team, and the model usually takes part in this meeting, as well. The art director is the boss and usually represents either the company you are shooting for or the advertising firm and dictates what's going on and what to shoot. Second in charge is you, the photographer, but the shoot is usually a collaboration of your talents, although the art director sets the tone and tells you what he or she is looking for in the shot.

In this meeting, you come up with any last-minute ideas and make sure everyone is on the same page. From there, the hair and makeup stylist will take the model to work on her hair and apply the makeup in accordance to the look and feel of the outfit and overall style of the shoot. While the model is in hair and makeup, which usually lasts 1 to 2 hours, I usually take that time to set up lighting, whip out my notes, ensure that the cameras are clean and tethered, and so on.

When the model's hair is ready, usually she is still wearing her casual clothes and is either barefoot or wearing flats. At this time you can have her put on heels if they are essential to the shot in order to fine tune lighting; otherwise, she can stay in her comfortable footwear. Next, I shoot a few test shots to verify that the lighting is good or if it's too hard or too soft. I make any needed adjustments while on set and then have the model get dressed for the shoot.

When the model finally is fully dressed, you're ready to go! I do a few additional test shots and then look at any additional visuals or samples and again run through any last minute ideas that

might have come up while she was getting prepared or that might come to mind now that everyone sees her in full hair, makeup, and wardrobe. At this point, I let the model warm up, during which time I shoot 15 to 20 images while she does her thing and I get a feel for the light and how it's reacting. I also look at the clothes and decide whether I'm going to add a fan. After the model gets into her rhythm and I get into mine and the art director checks out images on the big screen, giving us any last minute fine adjustments, I shoot for real.

When the art director calls it a wrap, the model puts her comfy clothes back on, the items she wore get checked back in for inventory, and that's when I lower my light stands to make them safe. If you are shooting tethered, you pretty much have your images backed up on the spot, so you don't have to do anything more than pack up your gear if you are out on location. Otherwise, this is when you would begin transferring images and start the copying/downloading process.



Figure 2.14

How to Pin Clothing

One thing that can make or break your photo—and certainly can make the difference in whether or not your client will hire again—is ensuring that the model's clothing is pinned correctly. Not only do you want your model to look great, you also want the clothing to fit the model in the most flattering way to show off the designer's vision, especially if you are trying to sell that piece of clothing. Rarely will a garment fit your model perfectly, just like in real life, so we pin where we can and where the pins won't be seen by the camera.

Figure 2.15 is an example of how to pin clothing so as to best accentuate the model's body and show off the dress. Before it was pinned, the dress was looking a little big in her rear-end area, and we wanted to be certain that it showed off her attractive figure. We started by pinning the fabric at about the middle of her back, in between her shoulder blades or slightly lower, to fit smoothly in the front without pulling it too tight. This also omitted any puckering or wrinkling of the fabric from the front. Next, right around where the model's belly button is located, we came around and pulled the fabric

and pinned it. (Depending on the fabric, the dress, and the height of the model, this could also be about where the tailbone is located.) We then came down a bit around her half-thigh and pinned the material back also around the bottom area of her buttocks. When you look at her from the front (Figure 2.16), the fabric is nice and tight, all the way from top to bottom, and doesn't look like we pinned it.

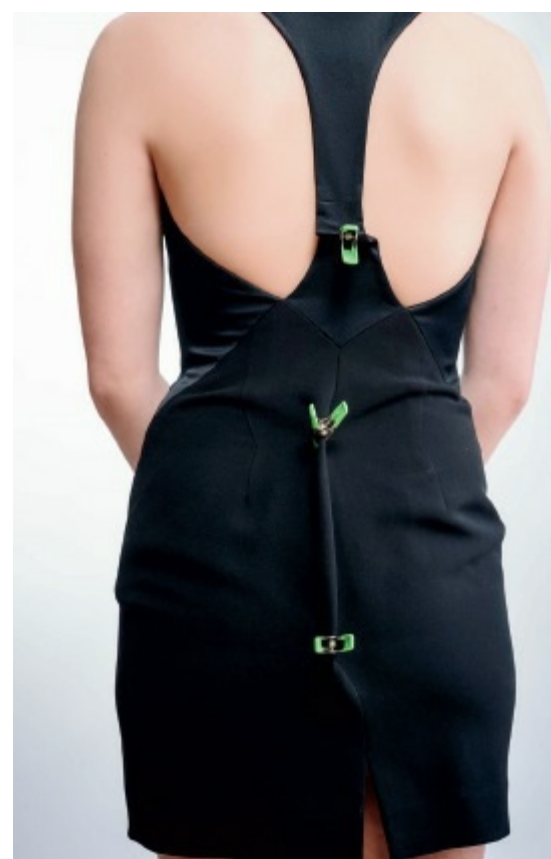


Figure 2.15

Now that we have the garment pinned, I will show you how slight adjustments can make a big difference in the photo going from good to great and how I got the final shot. Let's start with what you should definitely *not* do.

Looking again at Figure 2.16, you can see that the model's feet aren't placed correctly and her back foot is not on her tippy toes. It also appears as if she's gained about 40 pounds because I shot wide into those hips. The camera-left arm is hanging down with her knuckles turned toward the camera, leaving me shooting into the back of her hand. It's also impeding her body line. Her back hand is lazily draped across her head. You can clearly see the direct contrast to the correct version presented in Figure 2.17, in which her arm comes out and away from her head; this created that nice space between her forearm and shoulder.



Figure 2.16



Figure 2.17

In the second example shown in Figure 2.18, you can see that this pose isn't as strong or artistic as the first one, but closer. The only difference is that the front, camera-left arm is impeding her body line and her knuckles are again aimed directly into the camera. This demonstrates how just that one aspect of her arm impeding the body line can make all the difference, even when everything else is correct.



Figure 2.18

Now, look at the third example depicted in Figure 2.19. It's almost exactly like the hero shot shown in Figure 2.17. Everything is correct; however, the arm that is up is the one closest to the camera and the one that is down is the arm farthest away from the camera. Even though we rolled the thumb toward the camera so that you can see a space between the thumb and the knuckles, it still looks bad. Although this might look like a good pose because we didn't impede the body line, it's wrong because of the way the arm that is closest to the camera pushes her face into her armpit. The back arm looks fat and it doesn't have the nice crispness like it does in the original photo.



Figure 2.19

Figure 2.20 is the hero shot. If you start from the ground and work your way up, you'll see that one foot is aimed at the camera and the other is on its tippy toes, revealing the heel. The knees are together, which thins the waist. Her camera-left hand is dropped with the thumb toward the camera. We have correctly created a gap between her hand and her body so that we aren't impeding in any way, shape, or form the dress and her body line. Her back arm is tucked in and her chin is out giving us that tight jaw line. We have incorporated every key element to correct posing that I outlined in Chapter 1.



Figure 2.20

Getting your image right or wrong can depend solely on which arm is up or down and what is impeding the body line. The little maneuvers I described here make a huge difference in whether you create a hero shot the client will love or one that ends up being your last job with them.



CHAPTER 3: Seated Posing

Now that we've gone through the basic rules of posing, the next step is to discuss the rules of posing when your subjects are seated. Every time you move your model closer to the ground, myriad other issues come into play, and the slightest adjustment can make all the difference in the world. For example, where should you place the legs and feet? What about the arms and hands? Does it really matter how tall the stool or chair is on which my subjects sit? Seated poses make our goal of elongating and thinning out our subjects more challenging. And how do you pose a model on a stool who is wearing a very short dress? In this chapter, I will pass along to you what I've learned to get around these issues.

Using Chairs and Stools

In Figure 3.1, you see a white stool, a black stool, and a ruler showing a visual demonstration of the difference in height. I've come to realize that in the fashion industry everything can make or break a photograph, even something as subtle as a few inches. In Figure 3.1, the difference between the top of the white stool and the top of the black stool is 6 inches, and I'll show you next why this matters.



Figure 3.1

In Figure 3.2, the model is sitting fully on the white stool with her legs bent up high. If she is wearing a short black dress, as in this particular image, this exposes the bottom of that dress. That is neither the look you want, nor will you make your client or model happy. This stool is simply too short, and thus, it makes it difficult to avoid this pose. Even if her dress were longer, this pose doesn't elongate her legs or thin her out; in fact, it tends to do the opposite.



Figure 3.2

In Figure 3.3, I positioned the model fully seated on the black stool, and you can see the 6-inch difference. Her hip now bends below her pelvis, and her legs appear lengthened.



Figure 3.3

In addition to the height of the chair or stool, another consideration is where on the chair or stool the model should sit. If the model’s entire bottom sits fully on the surface of the stool or chair, it will flatten her behind and thighs, splaying them out beneath her. Not only does this add extra girth to an area of the body most women are already sensitive about, but also the entirety of the stool will show up in your pictures, which you don’t want either. The correct way to position a model on a stool or chair is to have her sit on the first quarter of it so that her weight is balanced equally between her rear and feet. Figure 3.4 illustrates the correct way to position your model on a stool; Figure 3.5 illustrates the wrong way.

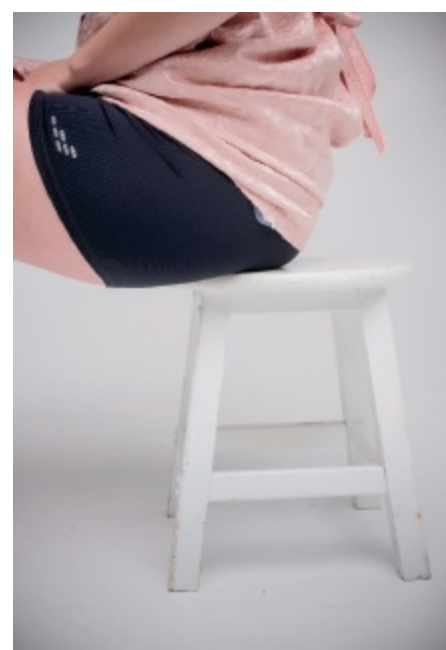


Figure 3.4: Correct sitting position

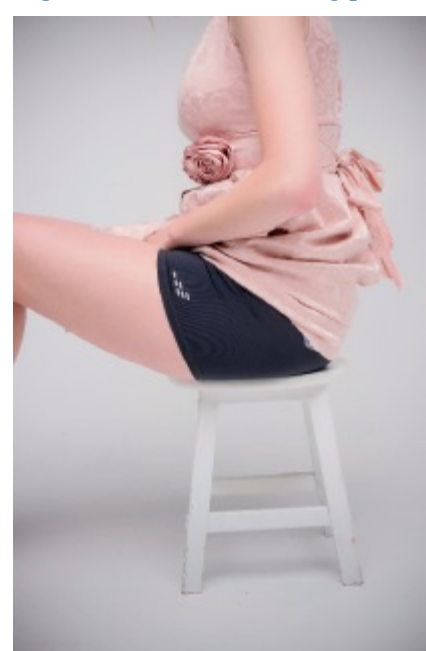


Figure 3.5: Wrong sitting position

Placing the Legs and Feet

It's essential to do what you can to elongate the model's legs when posing in a seated position. If you are shooting directly into the stool, you should make the stool the 0-degree mark. The model's right side would be the 90-degree mark, so you want to bend her knees to about 40 to 45 degrees. It's always good to shoot on an angle; accordingly we are shooting this image with her knees at about a 42-degree angle to the camera, as shown in Figure 3.6.



Figure 3.6

Figure 3.4 is my starting position. The model's right foot is the foot where I will place her weight and where she will hold her balance. Place her right foot perpendicular to the camera so that we can see the side of the shoe and the heel. Move her left foot such that you can see the toe box. Notice that by putting her in this position you can see a little bit of space between her legs, as demonstrated in Figure 3.7. It also makes her thighs seem heavier. So, when you are seating your model, this is an instance in which you can ignore my rule about always showing the toe box of one shoe and the side of the other shoe. It doesn't work at this angle.



Figure 3.7

For Figure 3.8, I simply had the model pick her front foot higher up on the tippy toe, which caused the calf muscle to extend. This also allowed for a slight break in the knees, which then folded together,

closing up this gap.



Figure 3.8

Figures 3.9 and 3.10 illustrate what to do. From the starting position shown in Figure 3.6, leave the model's right foot as it is. Move her left foot—the foot closest to camera—such that the toes actually set up kind of a miniature T-stance. The foot was originally pointed toward the camera, but then I had the model bend her ankle to lean it in toward her right, back foot. Bending the ankle is what causes the calf muscle to flex on the side, giving you the nice muscular calf leg. Next, separate her knees by about an inch and then have her roll her left foot inward at the ankle bone. By doing this, her foot pushes the front knee into the back knee, closing the gap between her legs. I also shot this from a really low camera profile, positioning the lens about 3 inches above the top of the stool. That's the degree line I shot that on if you want to duplicate this look.



Figure 3.9



Figure 3.10

In Figure 3.11, the only difference in this shot is that I rotated the model's body on the chair a little bit more, resulting in her sitting at a 45 to 50 degree profile to camera. Again, this is slightly breaking the shoe rule in that there's more of a profile view of both shoes. But if you notice, when I turned her just a tad, I pulled her front, closest to the camera or camera-right foot, back just a little and separated the feet a little more, which caused a bend in the ankles. This pressed the knees together, which flexed the calf and thigh muscles, giving you an attractive, long-looking leg.



Figure 3.11

It is also important to remember to seat the model correctly on the stool, as discussed earlier. In the images for which I shot the model seated on the two stools to show dimension, the model was sitting fully on the seat of the stool. But in the images for which I shot her showing only her heels and legs, she is only sitting on the first quarter of the stool—I shifted her behind up toward the edge. Her feet are spread apart roughly 12 to 13 inches between the front and back foot. Her heel is off the ground and rolled about 1.5 inches, which pushed the camera knee into the back knee. It doesn't take much movement to get the desired pose.

Placing the Arms and Hands

After you have your feet placed, the next step is to position the upper body and hands. Instruct your model to pretend that she has a watch on her hand and cross her wrists where that watch would be. Then stick her arms down in this position between her legs. The reason for sticking her arms down crossed in this manner is that it creates a diamond shape across the shoulders. If you chose instead to have her simply rest them on her legs, it would cause her shoulders and biceps to flex, thus protruding out and looking bulky and unattractive. Thus, by crossing her wrists and bringing her arms down, she's created that nice diamond shape between her collar bone and her elbows as it forces her shoulders to naturally pull forward, as depicted in Figure 3.12.



Figure 3.12

At this point, recheck the model's feet. Leave her right foot in the same position as it was in the previous discussion of foot placement (refer to Figure 3.9) and move her left foot slightly toward the camera. Open the front foot up by turning it out such that the toes are pointing slightly more toward the camera, and back it up 15 inches or so. Next, roll the foot and bend the ankle in as she leans forward. When you place the feet this way, it forces the knees together and you won't have to worry about accidentally shooting up the model's dress.

You can leave one hand between the model's legs and move one out. Even though you won't really be able to see it, her left hand is shot down between her legs. Her right hand is going to come out and lay across her left leg while still essentially crossing it at the "watch" mark or a little bit higher up on the arm. Roll her hand out and let it fly on the side of her leg. Confirm that her thumb points toward the camera to elongate the fingers. This will drop the front shoulder and create that desired "S" curve along the model's back and posterior line. Note that her collarbone is positioned in the same direction. Keep her head straight and point her chin slightly down. Turn her hair part toward camera-left a little and rotate her nose back toward the right. By doing this, you achieve a really tight jaw line as well as tight neck muscles and clavicle.

If you want to really "fashion" this same pose out (refer to Figure 3.13), all you have to do is use the watch trick mentioned earlier. Spread the model's knees just a tad, pretend she's wearing a watch, cross her hands at the watch, and push the hands through her legs. Be careful not to pull the elbows out. Then, if you want more of a passive or romantic pose, slightly drop down the shoulder closest to the camera, creating space between the shoulder and the chin. This opens the chest and gives you a more amenable look. But, if you want a more moody feel, raise the shoulder up. By raising the shoulder it takes up the dead space between the chin and shoulder. If you leave one arm between her legs, the arm closest to the camera is the one you leave and the other you take out and put it up on her collarbone or neck or drape it across her waist.



Figure 3.13

Using this trick makes the model look skinny by pulling her clavicle forward and allowing you to see through the region between the elbows and her abs. The small of her back has a curve to it and her shoes are in the right spot. You can see the side profile of her heels and the back foot is aimed slightly toward the camera, enabling you to see the toe box. With this pose, the important part is to sit her up and straighten the spine a bit more, which prevents her from looking so hunched over.

After you have the lower half situated, you can use the top half artistically to run through different looks.

Seated Poses with a Short Dress

As you learned in the discussion of the two different-sized stools, seated posing can be tricky if your model is wearing a very short dress. For best posing use a stool that is approximately 12 to 13 inches off the ground and position her behind on the first quarter of the stool. This is the position of the model in all the correct poses I discuss in this section. This position makes it possible for you to lean your model forward or backward while ensuring her thighs don't splay out flatly beneath her, making her look heavier than she is.



Figure 3.14

It is also a good rule of thumb to have your model wear a slimming undergarment under her dress, such as Spanx®. This gives you the freedom to move the model around more easily, and if there should be a slip up or wardrobe malfunction, no one will be embarrassed or feel uncomfortable. This is especially important and appropriate when working with younger models or high school seniors.

Pose 1: Correct Pose

Figure 3.15 demonstrates a correct way to pose a model in a seated position on a stool. If I had the model sit fully on the stool with her entire bottom, the top of the dress would fit well over her legs, but the bottom of the dress wouldn't, and we'd be able to see up her skirt. So, to do an accurate and pleasing sitting pose, remember to put the model on a stool that is approximately 12 to 13 inches off of the ground and seat her about a quarter of the way on the stool. Remember to also continue to adhere to the rules, showing two sides of her shoes, properly placing her hands, and so on.



Figure 3.15

To get this shot, I dropped the model’s front leg and placed her knee almost all the way to the ground (Figure 3.16). This prevented me from inadvertently shooting up her skirt! Next, I turned her camera-left foot with the high knee toward the camera. If you notice, I had her place elbow inside her leg, which precluded me blocking her jaw lines (Figure 3.17), and I draped her front arm across her body (Figure 3.18).



Figure 3.16



Figure 3.17



Figure 3.18

Figures 3.19 through 3.22 illustrate how the correct pose looks from different angles, but you'd still shoot her at the original angle from which you are shooting into her pinky.



Figure 3.19



Figure 3.20



Figure 3.21

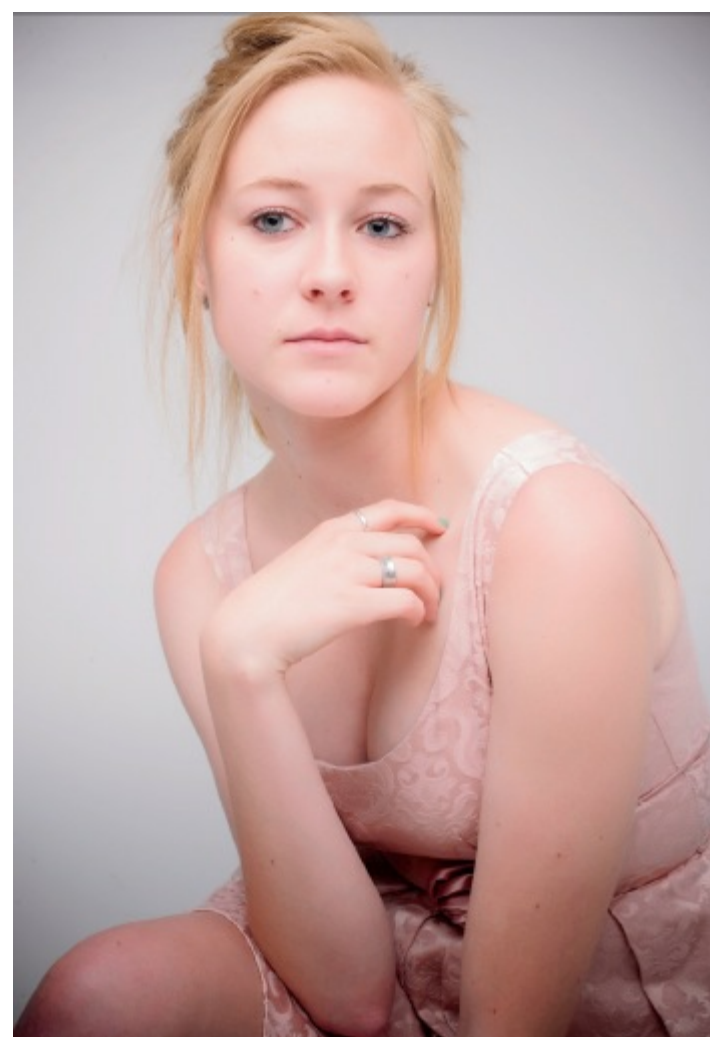


Figure 3.22

Pose 2: Incorrect Pose

Figure 3.23 displays how if you put your model's feet side by side, on the same plane together, as exhibited in Figure 3.23, it might look nice upon first glance but will still create problems. First, her skirt tends to form a "teepee" under her, and depending on the length of the dress, might allow an unwanted view up her dress, even if just a tad. By crossing her hands over the knees, you don't have the ability to twist her wrist, which means you are shooting into the back of her hand and all of her fingers.



Figure 3.23

By putting the majority of her weight on the front legs, pressing the arms into the legs, you are going to create redness and stress marks on the top of her knee and thigh area. Even if you could use Adobe Photoshop to edit out anything you might see, the moment you move her arms, those red marks will be there and show up in the next shot or you will have to wait for them to disappear. More important, if she puts weight on her arm that is closest to camera (Figure 3.24), this will activate the muscles in the top of her arm, which will push that back arm out and create a hunched back, as well.



Figure 3.24

Even if you were to try to make this pose better, the only way to do it would be to tilt her head forward toward her feet, which would make her head look better, but her back would still look hunched over. If she then straightens her head more, that would elongate her back, but then you

emphasize the jowls and creases in her neck (Figure 3.25). Either way, it's not attractive, because you've eliminated your movements.

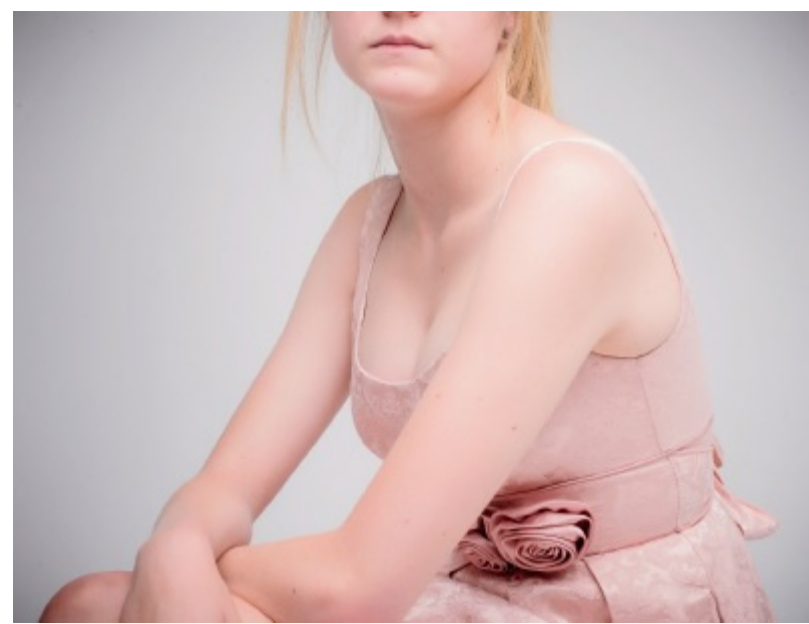


Figure 3.25

Pose 3: Correct Variation of Pose 1

Figure 3.26 illustrates a correct variation of Pose 1. In this version, I crossed the model's arms at the wrists (Figure 3.27), placing them at a diagonal to her body. This gives the pose a more edgy, dynamic feel; whereas Pose 1 appears softer, with the model's hand up by her collar bone (Figure 3.15).



Figure 3.26



Figure 3.27

Pose 4: Incorrect Variation of Pose 1

Figure 3.28 demonstrates an incorrect variation of Pose 1. Here the model's arms are resting firmly on her legs, which, as discussed earlier, might cause stress marks or redness on her thighs (Figure 3.29). You also see the back of her hand. In addition, she might be creating marks and discolorations on her leg because her left knee is pressed firmly into her right leg (Figure 3.30).



Figure 3.28



Figure 3.29



Figure 3.30

Pose 5: Correct; Open, Elongated Shot

To achieve the pose shown in Figure 3.31, have your model sit down correctly on the stool, as in

Pose 1. You create the effect of elongating the model's body by sliding her off the stool just a little more to give her length. This opens up her top half, as well. Next, start with the back, right leg and put her foot almost flat on the ground where you can just barely get your fingertips under her shoe. Then, take her left leg—the leg closest to camera—and lift it off the ground to where her toes line up about where the ankle bone is on the back leg. After that, point her toes downward. Double-check that the dress is hanging down properly to avoid accidentally shooting up her skirt. You can help this a bit by gathering any extra material and tuck it at the hip so that the fabric doesn't stick out.



Figure 3.31

Move the model's back arm so that it is hidden behind her upper body. This gives a clean shot across her chest, stomach, and over her legs. Finally, take her front hand—the one closest to the camera—and place it down on her hip. Relax her shoulders, lean her back very slightly, turn her head toward the camera, and raise it up a little bit to get a nice, tight jaw line.



CHAPTER 4: Posing on the Ground

As mentioned in Chapter 3, when you move a model's body closer to the ground, you begin to encounter ever increasing problems in your efforts to thin and elongate. This is the most challenging when posing your subjects directly on the ground because their bodies are going to be mostly horizontal to the camera; thus, they will tend to look wider or fatter than they actually are. You simply have more parts of the body touching the surface and pressing the skin and muscles outward. I try to avoid posing on the ground, but if your model or art director insists on it, I've come up with some do's and don'ts that can help you pull it off.

Common Techniques

If you are working outdoors on the ground with your model and you can't elevate her by very much, there are some important tips to keep in mind. One thing I notice a lot of photographers doing is laying the model on the ground horizontally to the camera plane and then leaning her backward slightly onto her hand. There are many things that can go wrong with this pose, no matter how you do it.

If you put the model's hand flat on the ground, this can create many unattractive results. It typically causes a rotation of the elbow, which produces an odd double-jointed look. It also flexes her deltoid muscle, which will protrude outward, thus making the arm look really fat. Additionally, it tends to push the shoulder up, resulting in the dreaded spiky chicken nugget. (If you don't recall what this looks like, take a quick look back in Chapter 1.) The easiest thing to do is to put a slight bend in the elbow. This will allow for her abs to take on the work while deactivating that deltoid muscle.

As far as the legs are concerned in this pose, even if you put the back leg up and the front leg under, that puts the front knee closest to the camera, making it look larger than it actually is. You probably don't want to feature her leg square and up close in front of the camera, especially if she has scarring on her knee. Her buttocks also have the tendency to splay out in this position and this will make her appear much heavier than she actually is, as well. Also, because we are usually focused on the clothing, you'll end up creasing her clothing at the joint where the thigh connects to the hip bone. This

particular pose has a lot of problems with it and I do not advise using it—ever.

If you are stuck, however, and must work with this particular pose, have the model position the front leg up in the air while crossing the back leg under it. This gives her rear end a curve without causing it to look fat. Also, you've taken the knee cap and aimed it away from the camera, so then all you see is the thigh and shin. This way, the weight can be placed on the back hand, which will be hidden by the torso, and allow the abs to straighten and flex. The front arm can be placed along the side of the body and the hand on the back pocket.

You can also take the front arm and place it lightly on the ground, giving some space between her fingers and slightly bending the elbow. This forces the clavicle and shoulders to relax and avoids activating the deltoid muscle, thus eliminating that issue.

Figure 4.1 is a variation of this description. Even though we are cheating here by using a huge 28×15×15-foot *cyclorama* wall, this gives you the general idea.



Figure 4.1

Now that I've pointed out some pitfalls, here's the correction for this pose that I think looks best.

Elevate your model about a foot off the ground such as on a crate, a rock, or a staircase, or if you're lucky, you might find a prop like the old couch displayed in Figures 4.2 and 4.3. At this point, all of the basic T-stance and body rules we went over in Chapter 1 will begin to come into play. Position the model's body about 40 degrees from the camera plane and open the feet. Then, take the front leg and bend it back toward her behind, which will drop her knee down slightly. Take her front foot and pull it back slightly. This makes it possible to see the spike and curve of her heel and the side profile of the toe box all in one movement. Now, with her knees spread apart slightly, take her rear foot and pull it out just a little bit. Next, take the knee and angle it in toward the camera, closing up the space between her knees. Roll the toe back slightly to show the toe box of the back foot. By doing this, her body is now balanced.



Figure 4.2



Figure 4.3

The upper part of the model’s body, which is bearing all of her weight, is now being supported, letting the shoulders, clavicle, and back relax. Now, you can do anything with her hands. If you want the feel to be elegant and frilly, you can take the back arm and place her elbow on her thigh and bend the wrist in, angling her pinky toward the camera. This gives you the proper pose of the hand (shooting into the pinky), thinning out the hand. It also puts the shoulders at an angle.

Do’s and Don’ts of Posing a Model on the Ground

Photographing a model who is posed directly on the ground becomes especially tricky and difficult. In the following series of images, I illustrate what not to do and what makes each pose less than ideal.

Pose 1

In the pose shown in Figure 4.4, you can tell, even with shorts on, that our model has a flat backside when seated directly on the floor. Also notice her posture. Most subjects in this position will hunch over, and their body weight will sink into their pose. This isn't good, because it ends up giving her love handles and all kinds of unflattering bumps and protrusions in the midsection that women don't want—which they will eventually ask you to edit out in Adobe Photoshop!



Figure 4.4

I see this pose a lot, unfortunately. When you break it down, the model's rear end is flat on the ground, her leg closest to the camera tucks under, and her back leg comes up with her back elbow resting on her knee. The elbow bone resting on her leg bone creates wobble left or right, which makes her unstable. Additionally, in Figure 4.5 you can see a crater formed on the skin above the knee where pressure is being applied by the elbow.

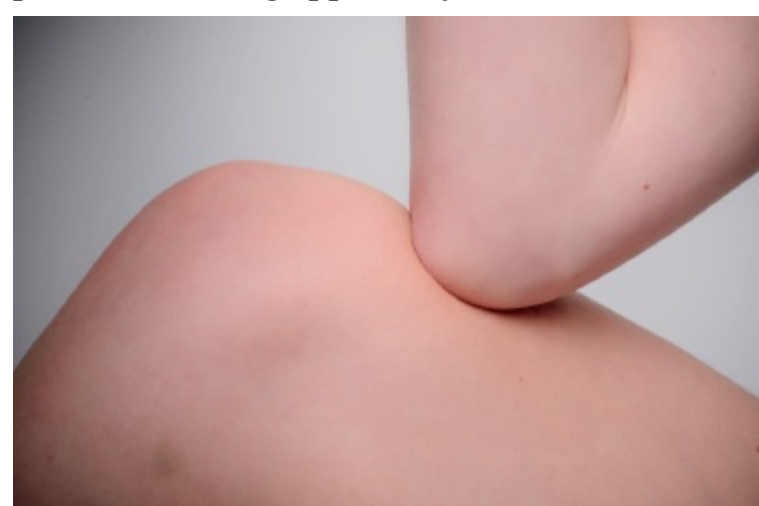


Figure 4.5

In Figure 4.6, I purposely tried to demonstrate how I gave her “man hands” as I pushed her hand into her face to over-emphasize the fact that even if her face touches her hand in the slightest bit, you push her skin in and create a distracted jaw line. With her hand on her face in this manner, it obscures her nice, long jaw line that I showcased in the correct poses.

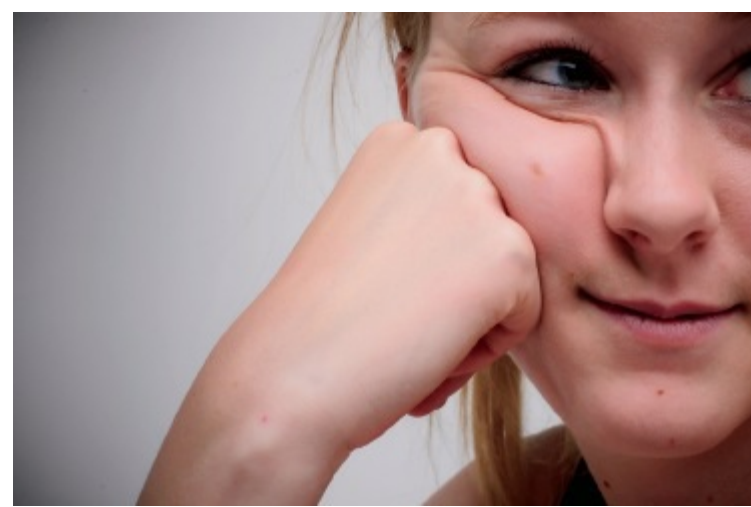


Figure 4.6

I draped her arm closest to the camera down in front of her, and even if she were to grab her ankle, put it on her knee, or tuck it inside, doing so would expand her torso, giving her the appearance of added weight.

Pose 2

In Figure 4.7 the model is sitting on the floor with her legs extended and arms behind her. We see this pose often, as well. Her legs by her side like this yields the unattractive look of a double leg, or one big leg, which makes her look heavier. Her chest and torso are open and clean, but as we go up to her head, you'll see that her face is tucked into her chin line quite a bit. Again, this isn't good, because doing this interrupts the jaw line.



Figure 4.7

Now, work your way to the model's shoulder and then down to her hand. In Figure 4.8, notice that she has a nice, clean shoulder, but her deltoid muscle is sticking out because she's leaning on it. It also looks as if her arm is broken at her elbow. Bend that joint: Don't leave it straight. Even a slight bend will deactivate the deltoid muscle and take the weight off of her upper arm.



Figure 4.8

Look at the close-up of the model's hand shown in Figure 4.9. Putting all of her weight on her hand pushes the veins out, and her fingers are literally turning red because she is supporting her weight in this fashion.



Figure 4.9

Pose 3

In the pose illustrated in Figure 4.10, I left the model's front leg closest to the camera extended but brought her back leg up, thus thinning out her leg and showing that she does actually have two of them. I sat her up a little bit taller to allow her to not put so much weight on her arm, alleviating the deltoid muscle and all the blood flowing to her hand. I then directed her to lean back slightly so that her weight was mostly supported on her back arm, which you actually don't see. In addition to alleviating the deltoid muscle from protruding, this also corrects the broken elbow. However, I then gained the nasty chicken nugget! You can see it sticking out. So, again I wouldn't do this. This pose is still

wrong, but if you were to become stuck, I'd take the chicken nugget over the errors of the previous pose.



Figure 4.10

Pose 4

In Figure 4.11, I have the model sitting up a bit more with her hands on her ankle bone. She has a nice face, a strong jaw line, relaxed shoulders and collarbone, and is positioned at a relaxed forward-leaning angle toward the camera. This looks pleasant and is correct. However, the good stuff stops there. Her chest is hidden by her knee and looks funny. This position is a good way to shoot bigger women because you hide all of that, but this particular model is long and lanky and I didn't use that to my advantage with this pose. Instead, I squished her up. And, because she's long and lanky, I used her long legs, torso, and arms to my advantage giving me three parallel lines. From the perspective of design, to then have this one knee sticking off to the side looks awkward. Also, what's most notable is her hands and how they are wrapped around her ankle bones, which make her fingers look like little fat sausages. By the way, this type of shot can only be done if the model is in shorts or pants—you could never do this if she were wearing a skirt or dress.



Figure 4.11

Pose 5

For Figure 4.12, I have a cute pose that I see a lot, and upon first glance one might think, “What’s wrong with this?” Well, for one, when your model is lying down on her stomach with her hands on her face, she’s squishing her face, interrupting the jaw line; and two, it looks as if her feet are growing out of the back of her head. But, the biggest problem I see with this pose is that you would be shooting right down her shirt! This really isn’t what you want to do and it’s in poor taste as a professional.



Figure 4.12

Pose 6

Figure 4.13 is a revised version of the pose presented in Figure 4.12. I tweaked the pose a bit to make it better, but it is still not great. I angled the model a little bit to the camera, which is an easy way to not have the feet appear as if they are growing out of the back of her head. I also created nice blocking lines with her arms by crossing them in front of her. Next, I instructed her to lay her right hand on the ground, crossing it in front of her while rolling her left hand up to her chin without pressing too much into the skin. This barely gives an uninterrupted jaw line, which is close, but still not best.



Figure 4.13

Pose 7

In the pose demonstrated in Figure 4.14, I did the exact same thing as in the previous pose, except this time I took the model's right hand and rolled it up under her arm pit, as if she's hugging herself. This makes her look torqued and twisted and is just wrong.



Figure 4.14

Pose 8

In this pose, shown in Figure 4.15, the model is lying down on her side with her left arm up on her hip in the “cheerleader” pose. You can see tension in her chest, like a body builder, and you can see her arm pits. The bent wrist supporting her head is also just horrid.



Figure 4.15

Pose 9

I am sure that by now you can pick out the multiple problems in this photo. First, this pose is wrong because in my opinion, it's dated, hokey, and just boring. You're blocking The Box (her chest) with the model's arms. Her hand supporting her head is going to leave indentions on her head and create stress marks on her wrist. Her left hand is blocking her chest, creating a stopping line. And with her body being on her hip and her legs on top of each other, it makes her look wider than she truly is.



Figure 4.16



CHAPTER 5: Camera Angles

When it comes to angles it's really quite simple: Your pose will dictate your camera angle or your camera angle will dictate your pose. Working with camera angles and posing in conjunction with one another can turn an average photograph into a powerful photograph. Utilizing different lenses and their proper focal lengths is critical. Using the focal lengths with the lens and angle at which you choose to photograph the model will render an image as you have previsualized it.

Perspective angles and *distortion angles* are two key camera angles that you will use most often in fashion photography, and knowing the difference between them and when to use each to your advantage will make all the difference in your photograph. In this chapter, I will explain the difference between these two angles and offer tips on how best to utilize them in your work.

Perspective Angles

Your subject's pose and the composition of your photographs are greatly influenced by the perspective at which they are shot. As you can see from the images throughout this book and in the image shown in Figure 5.1, I usually shoot from a very low perspective angle. Even if I'm not lying directly on the ground, I am sitting or holding the camera low so that there's at least a slight upward angle on my subject. By getting low, I drop the horizon line in the back of the subject.



Figure 5.1

If you are shooting on location, place the horizon line low so that the model's head will be more up in the sky. Placing your model's head higher in the sky will distract from the sky being your focal point. Also, by getting low, you imbue your models with that bigger than life, "super hero" appearance, and make them seem taller, leaner, and more confident.

In simple psychological terms, if you look up at somebody, that person appears to be a greater being than you are and often you subconsciously feel that they are indeed more important than you. For example, you are never supposed to look down on children because they might interpret that negatively, causing them to feel less than you, which can affect their self-confidence. As a result, we are encouraged to get down to their level when speaking to them, whenever possible.

What irritates me the most is when the model is standing and the photographer is also standing,

resulting in an image that's shot from the same perspective or level. This ends up creating a lens distortion. You want the model's head and the camera height to be offset from one another. If one is standing, the other needs to get lower.

Men

There are a few good rules of thumb to follow when photographing men. If you are shooting your male subject at full length, I recommend that you sit down on the ground and angle your lens up toward him. Sitting on your bootie puts the camera at roughly the knee level of the model, imparting that powerful, dignified, and larger than life feel as you look up at him.

If you are photographing him at three-quarter length, I would come up just a little bit, maybe placing one knee down on the ground. This places the camera height at about the waist level for most men.

If you're going to take a head shot, which is from the chest up, you have a couple of options. If it's a business shot and he's in a suit, I recommend you sit him down and that you stand. If you are shooting something more casual or on the fashion side, the model can stand and you can lean up against a tall bar stool or other object around that height to put the camera at approximately his nose level. These are the two best two ways to shoot male portraits: You are looking just slightly down, as demonstrated in Figure 5.2, or the camera is right at nose level (see Figure 5.3) for a more straight-on angle. You don't want to look up their noses, but you also don't want to look too far down on them either.



Figure 5.2: Shooting slightly downward



Figure 5.3: Shooting straight at nose level

Women

When you photograph women, the optimum angle at which you want to shoot them is slightly different than the angle that works best for men. For a full-length image of a woman, I recommend you do as I do and lay on your stomach on the ground, so that your camera is about an inch off the ground. If the model is in heels, this position places your camera at right about her ankles, as shown in Figure 5.4. For a three-quarter length shot, I usually sit on the ground, which situates the camera angle at about her knees, as depicted in Figure 5.5.



Figure 5.4



Figure 5.5

For head shots, the same rules for taking portraits of men generally apply to women, as well. However, because some rules are made to be broken, you can change it up a bit after you master the basics.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the pros and cons of using various sized stools. Stools are invaluable to have around, and here's why: If you're going to shoot a male model and he is taller than you, you can get up on a stool to shoot slightly down at him. When shooting down on him the center of the lens should be on the nose, while you're focusing on the eyes.

For women, if they can lean forward slightly, this will make their eyes look bigger. So, while shooting at a downward angle from a stool might not be in the "photographer's rule book," a slight downward angle can look quite nice, and having several stools in various sizes at your disposal can help you get to that sweet spot.

Basically, there are two main shooting angles: one angle is to shoot straight on, which is also called shooting *under the eyes*. When you shoot under the eyes, or the nose area, it helps your model come across as confident. This is especially important when capturing portraits or head shots. You don't physically tilt your camera up so that you are shooting up the nose; rather, your camera remains level to the ground. You just lower the camera body so that the lens is equal to or slightly lower than the subject's chin. The second angle is to shoot slightly downward on your model, which is demonstrated in Figure 5.6. Whichever angle you choose, it's important to always focus on the model's eyes. If the model's head is turned, focus on the eye that is closest to the camera. Keep your camera aimed at the nose area, but always focus on the eyes.

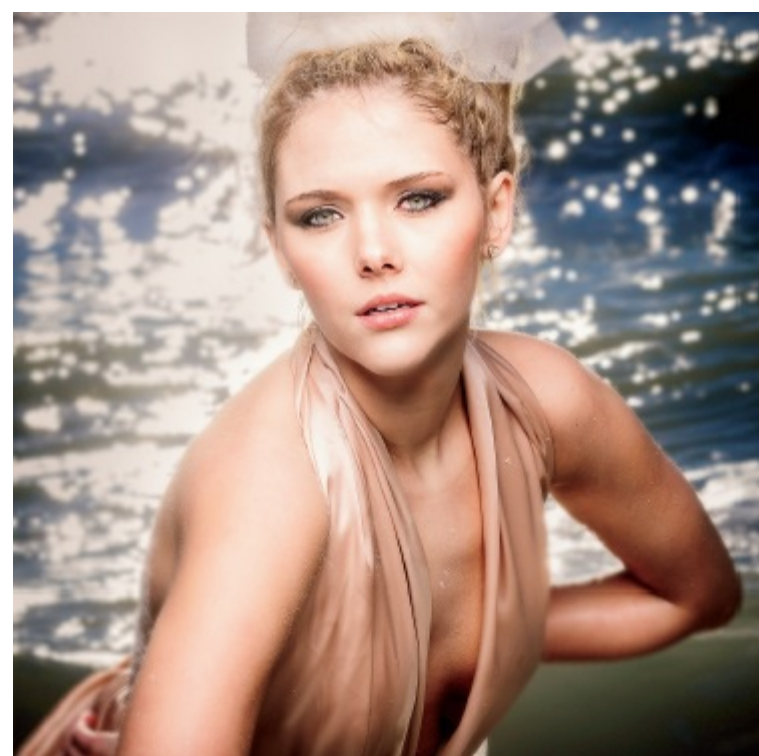


Figure 5.6: An example of shooting slightly downward

A Trusty Step Ladder

An unconventional photography tool that I like and use a lot is a step ladder. I carry your everyday, around-the-home type of ladder with me because again, when you're talking about angles, you don't want the camera to be on the same plane as the subject. When the model and photographer stand parallel to one another and at about the same height, it yields a flat, boring look. If you can get low, you are going to give your subject a strong look, but getting high can also give you a really nice, cool look, too, so sometimes I get on a ladder and shoot at more of an extreme angle down onto the subject. Thus, the ladder. It is always good to have the ability to shoot at varying heights, depending on your subject and object of the shoot.

I was on a photoshoot on a dry lake bed in Las Vegas once, and the art director wanted the dried, cracked dirt underneath the model to be seen and to expand out beyond her. The art director didn't care about seeing the sky, and besides, shooting down at our model with the texture below was far more interesting. By getting up really high on a ladder, it made the horizon line rise up very high, which allowed me to get a lot of foreground and earth beneath the model in the shot.

For me, if I'm going to get up on a ladder, I'm going to create some space by putting my subjects a little farther out in the photograph and away from me. If they are close to me, my downward angle is going to be too steep, so I back off a little bit. For example, if I am photographing a bride and a groom and I want to show the landscape and environment around them, I'd have them pose about 10 to 15 feet away from me. I'd then climb up on a ladder, thus avoiding such a harsh downward angle. This, I think, is the best use of a step ladder.

Distortion Angles

Every lens creates its own distortion angle, and the focal length you choose will create different types of distortion. A wide-angle lens such as a 24 or 28mm will stretch your subjects out and make them look fatter; whereas a telephoto lens such as a 105 or 200mm will compress your subjects and make

them appear skinnier. The distortion that is inherent in longer focal length lenses is called *pincushion distortion*. It tends to make the subject appear elongated if not corrected. This would account for the slimming effect these lenses have on human subjects. Thus, the amount of stretching or compression caused by the focal length of your selected lens will direct you as to your height and how close you should be to the subject.

When shooting with a wide-angle lens, the closer you are to your subjects, the wider, more cartoonish, or surreal they will appear. With a telephoto lens, when close to your subject, the background, not necessarily your model, will compress. Many portrait photographers love the 200mm lens for this reason. A 200mm lens compresses, causing the background to go out of focus and blur any texture, which creates a more emphatic focus on the subject.

Going back to the idea of shooting up at the model while lying on the ground to make her look taller and thinner, you can see now how choosing the right lens can either bring this look about or prevent it from happening. If you choose a wide-angle lens, you're going to stretch your model too wide and make her look fat. By choosing a telephoto lens, you end up stretching her legs and torso upward, making them appear longer, which tends to make her appear skinnier. All lenses have a distortion factor, and you need to really understand how the angle in which you photograph will affect this distortion factor in a good or bad way.



Figure 5.7

I see a lot of photographers use a typical 28 to 80mm-range lens while standing. When both you and your subject are standing and you are close up to the subject, you're then focusing on the subject's head. Doing this with one of those lenses makes the subject's head look normal, but then the chest, waist, and legs look squatty and compressed. By using the same lens lying down, yes you are still distorting, but you're making the subject's legs look longer and thinner (see Figure 5.8). So, a low camera angle with a short focal length makes for the best result in this regard. Of course, choosing to shoot with a wide-angle lens is a conscious decision, as some distortion is inevitable. If you truly don't want to worry about any distortion, use a longer lens and back up.



Figure 5.8

If you're shooting for commercial purposes, an 85mm lens is usually perfect (see Figure 5.9). It won't distort or make your subjects look otherworldly; it will give you a slight compression factor because it's one past normal and very accurate to the model. If you are doing an art image, a wider lens might work well. If you're doing something for a fashion magazine, a 50 or 85mm lens is great.



Figure 5.9

When I move in closer for a three-quarter length pose, I don't use a wide-angle lens unless it's a complete art image. If it's an art image, it's in its own field, which means that you can shoot to taste. But otherwise, an 85mm is the best lens for shooting three-quarter length. The 105mm would do the same thing, as well; it will just barely give you that distortion, making the model more "real looking" or three-dimensional.

When shooting a head shot, the 105mm lens is perfect and the 135mm is even better. A lot of photographers use a 200mm lens; however, I prefer the others. Most head shots are commercial and likely done in the studio, and most photographers don't have a studio big enough to use this range of lens. Unless you're going to use a walkie-talkie to tell your model to turn her head, I wouldn't use a 200mm and be forced to shoot that far away from her, unless you are on location and have a lot of room to back up.

Another posing trick I like to use is to sit the model on the ground, especially if my subject is a child or a high schooler. I then stand right over the top of her. This forces her to have to bring her head up to me, which makes her eyes really big, colorful, and bright as they then reflect the sun, sky, or other lighting. Your best off shooting this by using a 105mm lens because you are shooting quite close to the model. If I used a more "normal" lens, it would end up stretching her face and making it look wider. By using a longer lens such as a 105mm, it provides the compression to correct for how close I am. Her entire face fills the frame and her eyes look huge with lots of detail and color. I love the image in Figure 5.10; it is an example of how aiming the camera at a steep downward angle lends the subject a big, "doe eyed" look.

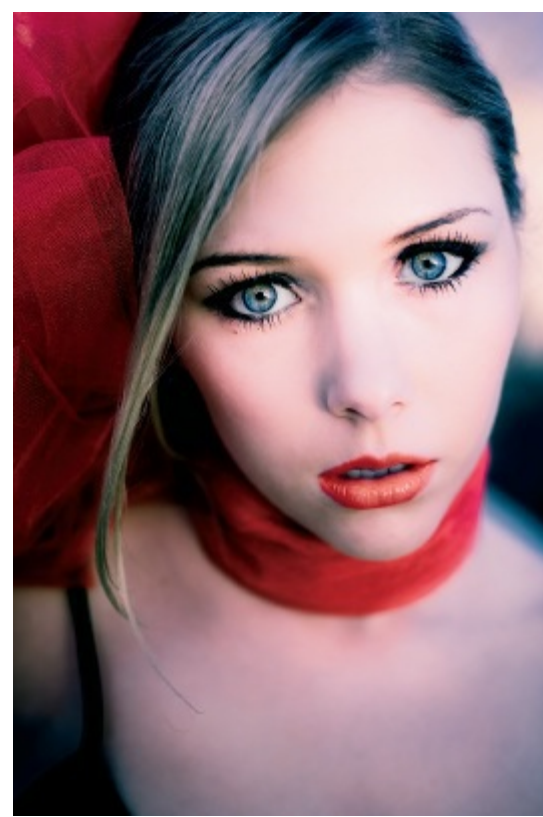


Figure 5.10: An example of shooting with a steep downward angle



CHAPTER 6: Equipment

To express it in basic terms, photography can't happen without equipment, and the art of photography comes down to the quality of your equipment. True, if you have the eye and are good at composition, you can create a great photograph by using your camera phone, but when shooting at the professional level, it's a different ball game, altogether. Having the appropriate, high-quality equipment can make all the difference in whether you get that big job.

I'm not evangelical about one brand over another, and I won't go into that here to any great depth. However, you will hear arguments for both sides, and you will need to decide on your own what works best for you and with what equipment you're most comfortable. I will list out the brands I use, but by all means, this is not meant to lessen the competitors for each device. You will just eventually find what you like best, and I only recommend spending your money wisely. What I *will* also always urge is that you buy the best equipment that you can afford. Photography is *not* a cheap profession by any means, and you will find yourself constantly upgrading and replacing equipment. So, start out with the basics and when you can afford better, then do so, because it will only make your photography the better for having done so. I'm also an advocate for getting the shot by using the best equipment you can afford *while* you're shooting. Don't think you can fix everything in postproduction, and that is especially true in fashion photography. Your image needs to be crisp and clean with the lighting dead on or you won't make it. That is where the rubber hits the road, and a true photographer stands out. Think back to when, not so long ago, we were shooting on film and Adobe Photoshop didn't exist—either you got the shot or you didn't.

Cameras

As stated, I'm not big on advocating one camera brand over another. Personally, I shoot with Nikon, but you can use Canon or anything else and get the same results. It truly doesn't matter what brand of camera body you choose. A camera body is a camera body. It's a box that holds your image. It's a light-tight box.

However, you do need to get a full-frame model. You want that because the bigger the chip, the cleaner the image will be. But, it depends on your budget. So, buy the most you can afford and upgrade as you go. Just remember, the more megapixels the cleaner and less noisy (speckled or grainy) your image. You will notice a big difference in the size of the image sensor when you shoot with varying sizes. If you have too small a chip, you will see noise in the shadow areas of your image. For instance, the chip in my Nikon D2 was smaller, so when I shot something more dramatic that included shadows under the model's jaw line, that area would “develop” as grainy; thus, what I mean by “noise.” Now that I have a larger chip in my Nikon D3X—a full-frame 35mm chip—I no longer am plagued by that noise in the shadows or when I shoot at night.

Technically I suppose one might say, “Well, I can just clean that up in postproduction using Photoshop or Lightroom,” and you *could*. But, personally I don't like to do that because it makes your image look processed. In fashion, you want it to be as clear and as “untouched up” as possible. This is why we shoot with the Hasselblad for billboards or buses: The size of the chip gives you the most clarity and most life-like results. The Hasselblad medium format camera is *the* camera for getting

published in the fashion world. It's a completely different world. The resolution and quality is superior and there's just no comparison. You could put up a Nikon or Canon image using a 35mm camera with a full-frame chip and it will look fantastic, but when that image is bound for a billboard or a truck-sized advertisement, the Hasselblad just kills it.

The image shown in Figure 6.1 is 100 percent to scale to the size of your "film." The big outside box is a large box, so if you shoot with the Hasselblad, as depicted by the largest box, it's going to be cleaner and sharper because it captures a lot more resolution. It physically holds more pixels. The little one at the bottom represents more of an amateur camera. It doesn't have the physical ability to hold as many pixels, thus, less quality. As of this writing, the Canon 5D Mark III costs approximately \$3,500, the Nikon D3X sets you back around \$8,000, and a typical Hasselblad runs from around \$18,000 to over \$40,000. So, you truly get what you pay for!

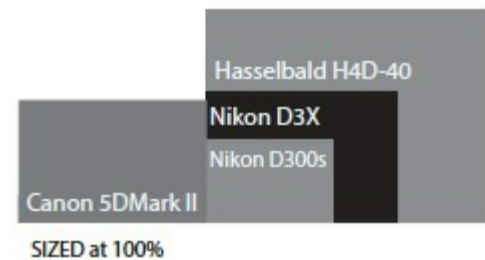


Figure 6.1

Lenses

Let's face it, there's a boatload of lenses out there! From combinations of zoom lenses to the traditional fixed lenses, also known as prime lenses, it's no wonder novices are often overwhelmed trying to learn which lenses give the most bang for the buck. Let's go over some lens basics and then I'll tell you what I like to use and why.

Types of Lenses

Lenses are pieces of optical glass shaped to focus the reflected light in our environment onto a sensor chip (or film) to create an image. When light passes through the pinhole or *aperture*, the lens is used to bring very small parts of light together so that the images projected are composed of sharper areas of light. The aperture blades inside the lens create the size of the pinhole by controlling the amount of light that comes in. For instance, if you shoot at an $f/22$, it creates a super tiny hole, which means hardly any light can come in.

Lenses are categorized into normal, telephoto, and wide-angle varieties, and have either a fixed focal length (prime) or a variable focal length (zoom). I describe each type of lens in the following subsections.

Normal Lenses

These lenses roughly duplicate what is seen by the human eye. In technical terms, the focal length of a normal lens is the same as the diagonal measurement of the film. Larger sheets of film require a longer lens to equal the factor of the film measurement. The 50mm is considered the only normal lens. It duplicates the human eye.

Focal length is the distance between the lens and the focal plane when the lens is focused on

infinity. Focal plane is the surface on which a focused lens forms a sharp image, also called the *film plane*.

Telephoto Lenses

Telephoto lenses have a focal length greater than normal. These lenses are also referred to as *long lenses*. Examples include 85mm, 105mm, 200mm, and 300mm lenses. 85mm is slightly telephoto, like a magnifying glass.

Wide-Angle Lenses

Also known as *short lenses*, these lenses have a focal length shorter than normal. They give a wide angle of viewing. Examples include 28mm, 24mm, and 20mm lenses.

Zoom Lenses

Zoom lenses give you the option to shoot using variable focal lengths. The three most common zoom lenses include the 17-35mm, 28-70mm, and 80-200mm.

Prime Lenses

The focal length for these lenses is fixed as opposed to a zoom lens, with which you can adjust the focal length. Many prime lenses have fewer moving parts, which enable the lens to have a larger aperture opening. Lens manufacturers produce prime lenses at or near the following focal lengths: 20mm, 24mm, 28mm, 35mm, 50mm, 85mm, 105mm, 135mm, 200mm, 300mm, 400mm, and 600mm. For prime lenses between 24mm and 200mm, many manufacturers produce two or more lenses with the same focal length but with different maximum apertures to suit the different needs of photographers.

Which Is Better: Prime or Zoom?

Throughout your career you will no doubt encounter fellow photographers making an argument that prime lenses are sharper than zoom lenses, or vice versa. I tell my students it's like comparing Ford and Chevy. On one side of the fence you have 100 cowboys advocating Ford and on the other side 100 cowboys advocating Chevy. This same argument goes on between users of prime and zoom lenses. It depends on your style and what type of photography you pursue. However, I will make my case for my side of the fence.

I have owned both zoom and prime lenses. I have bought \$2,000 zoom lenses, and my \$98 prime lens is sharper. If you were to open my current camera bag you will find only prime lenses. This is my preference, and most high-end fashion photographers I know agree with me. We are pretty firm in our opinion that a prime or fixed lens is the only way to go. Zoom lenses are nice but they are considered more of a "lazy lens." With prime lenses, you are forced to frame your shot, and if you don't frame it right, you have to physically move your body to get it accurate. Some photographers have asked me why I don't just use zoom lenses. My answer is that I have two good legs; I can walk forward or backward. Zoom lenses are easier on you, but you're giving up quality. Fix lenses, by far, give you much sharper and cleaner images. Technically the prime or fix lens is sharper because there isn't any glass moving inside. With the glass shifting back and forth inside your lens, after a while it's going to suffer wear and tear, and the internal elements will move slightly. Over time this creates a soft focus, which you don't want. Make no mistake

about it, when it comes to creating ads or doing \$30,000 photo shoots, the client wants a Ferrari, not a Yugo.

Common Lenses Used in the Fashion Industry

My favorite lenses for my work are my 24mm, 50mm, 85mm, 105mm, and 200mm lenses. Seventy percent of my work is done with just a few lenses: 24mm, 85mm, and 105mm. I really love the sharpness they yield and the working distance is ideal. The most common lenses used in the fashion industry are the 50mm, 85mm, and 105mm lenses. The reason they are most common is the compression each lens gives to the human body.

Many fashion photographers carry some pretty bizarre lenses in their camera bags, like a fisheye lens or a 17mm or something in that range. However, I'm pretty sure that you're also going to find a 20mm to 24mm wide-angle lens in their cases, as well, and probably even a 28mm. You will definitely find a 50mm; however, you'll also find an 85mm lens that is probably worn out. That particular lens is *the dog* for shooting fashion work. Its focal length, its properties, and its compression factors are all ideal for shooting fashion.

One of my favorite lenses is the 105mm Nikon DC (Defocus Control) lens, which is fabulous for shooting full length, three-quarter length, or really tight head shots. I love this lens! However, Nikon stopped making it 20 years ago, and they are hard to find; although rumor has it they might remake it. My fingers are crossed!

Sometimes, you will find a 135mm lens in the fashion photographer's bag. If you don't see a 135mm you'll probably see a 200mm lens. I've seen it go both ways. Fashion photographers usually prefer one over the other. You might also find an occasional zoom lens in their gear bags, but if you did, it's probably going to be a 17-35mm lens, with which the photographer can get creative. But, it's typically never the go-to lens. By far, that would be the 85mm 1:4. Figures 6.2 through 6.5 illustrate examples of different lenses.



Figure 6.2: Nikon 200mm lens



Figure 6.3: Nikon 24mm lens



Figure 6.4: Nikon 50mm lens



Figure 6.5: Nikon 85mm lens

Lighting and Lighting Kits

I use studio strobe lighting for my fashion work 100 percent of the time. I don't use Nikon or Canon speed lights, which are also known as the "little flashes." I own eight 800-watt studio strobes and one 250-watt studio strobe. The majority of the images shown in this book were all shot with 800-watt strobes. This is my favorite. One reason I love using 800-watt studio strobes is because they give me the power to shoot directly into the sun without my subject becoming completely lost in a silhouette.

A lot of people ask, "Why would I want to buy an 800-watt strobe for \$1,000 when I can buy a 500-watt strobe for \$500? Even though it's nearly half the power, 500-watts is still a lot of power." Or they ask, "Why wouldn't I want to save \$300 and buy a 650-watt strobe? Why do I need 800 watts of illumination power?" Well, for one, you get a lot of energy in that 800-watt strobe and two, it gives you the flexibility to do anything you want. But the hidden secret that a lot of photographers don't understand is that an 800-watt strobe reduces your *recycle time*. The recycle time is the amount of time it takes the strobe to recharge after you press the shutter button. When you are using an 800-watt strobe, the recharge time is a matter of seconds; whereas when you use a 500-watt strobe, the recharge time might be 1.25 seconds. So, some might think, "OK, about a second, I can live with that." Well you could, unless you're shooting a fashion session and then you can't. You need that recycle time to be a whole heck of a lot faster.

When I shoot in the studio and use 800-watt strobes, I often turn the strobes down to half power and shoot at half the light output. In a lot of cases, I use 1/30 or 1/64 of the strobes' power. But here's the hidden factor: if I'm only using 30 seconds of the strobes' power, my recycle time is less than 1 second, which gives me the option to "go Rambo" in my photography with rapid-fire shooting. In a fashion shoot, this makes it possible for you to click away without worrying whether your strobe is keeping up with you. If you're buying a low-wattage strobe and you are consistently using it full power or even at three-fourths of the power, you're always going to be pushing that two-second recycle time, which ends up taxing you and your models, throwing them out of rhythm. Consequently,

the lesson of why to buy powerful strobes is because in the end, it saves you frustration and time. The brand of the strobe doesn't matter; what's key is the power that comes out of it and the accessories that come with it. Depending on the accessories you'd like to use, the brand that carries an exuberant amount of accessories is why I would select one over the other. But, it's the same as the camera body: you will have people advocating for their favorite brand over others. Profoto and Elinchrom strobes are both equally great. My advice is that no matter which brand you choose, stick to your basic kit, which usually comes with two strobes, two umbrellas, and two umbrella reflectors. The reason I say this is because most photographers, especially when first starting out, can't afford to buy everything at once. Your lighting is a huge investment. I recommend going with a brand that carries a lot of accessories because most people have a set budget and the basic kit gives you what you need, and you can always add more to it when your budget allows.

Figures 6.6, 6.7, and 6.8 show examples of various lighting accessories. A *beauty dish* is an oversized reflector that produces a centralized sweet spot, where the light is most evenly distributed. You aim this at your model and it will give you the best and most even light. The diffusion is a translucent material you put in front of the beauty dish to soften the sweet spot. A *can* is industry slang for a reflector. It looks like a silver Folger's Coffee can, and back in the day, resourceful photographers used to drill out the back of these coffee cans and stick the light inside (thus the term "can"). The metal reflects and focuses the light on the subject. A 10-inch reflector will give you more focus of light than a 7-inch reflector. A *snoot* focuses the light to a very concentrated beam of light similar to that of a slide projector or like a water hose. The light comes out as a small beam. It is used as a hair light or accent light to provide an additional highlight to whatever it is that you aim it.



Figure 6.6: On the left, from left to right and back to front: 16-inch flat beauty dish with diffusion; two 7-inch reflectors/cans (the one on the right is shown with a grid); snoot; reflector

On the right, from back to front: 800-watt strobe, also known as the 750, with umbrella; 800-watt strobe with safety cap; 250-watt strobe



Figure 6.7: Close-up of strobes



*Figure 6.8: Back row: snoot, umbrella reflector, 7-inch reflector, 16-inch beauty dish
Front row: grids used to focus/hone the light much like a spotlight; grids come in 40 degrees, 30 degrees, and 20 degrees*

Figure 6.9 presents examples of two images shot by using two 800-watt strobes. The strobes throw enough light and power at the models so that they do not appear in silhouette, even though the sun is backlighting them. You can see more information about how I set up the lighting for this image at the end of this chapter.



Figure 6.9

Basic Fashion Photography Equipment

In addition to your camera, lenses, and basic lighting kit, there are other important items in which you will need to invest to succeed as a fashion photographer. Again, this is what I recommend, but you might find other items along the way that work well for you. Whatever you do, just remember to buy the best you can afford and keep upgrading.

Softboxes

A *softbox*, or *lightbank*, takes the raw light out of your strobe, bounces it around, and makes it even and... well, soft. It usually sits in front or to the side of the photographer or under the model; it depends on where you want to put the light. Many photographers try to eliminate harsh shadows, and the softbox has a nice wrap-around light quality that fills them in, especially on faces. The light wraps around and doesn't go past you as straight, undiffused light does. Softboxes diffuse the light so that both sides of a model's face are evenly lit. Most portrait photographers use soft boxes; whereas most fashion photographers use harder light with a beauty dish to soften the light. But, there are times even in fashion when you need a softbox.

In my repertoire of equipment, I have three 6 × 4-foot Chimera PRO II softboxes that you can see in Figure 6.10. I prefer Chimera products over other manufacturers because Chimera gear has a lifetime warranty, which is good even in the event that you tend to be abusive to your equipment. They also have stronger poles that hold the boxes together, which is better than the fiberglass rods you'll see from other manufacturers. What I love the most, though, is that Chimera uses real leather to reinforce the corners of their boxes. Those corners take the most abuse, so this gives you that extra longevity and support.



Figure 6.10: A Large 6 × 4-foot softbox on a stand

In addition to the three 6 × 4-foot Pro II Softboxes, I also have a Chimera 8-foot Octagon box, known as the “OctaPlus,” a 5-foot OctaPlus box, and a 3-foot OctaPlus box. I also have two Chimera 36-inch grids with louvers, which I prefer to use for soft light. However, in the last couple of years I changed my style a little bit and have become a big fan of hard light. Some of the hard light equipment that I absolutely love is a simple 7-inch can or a 7-inch reflector with 30-degree grid spots. They are amazing! They aren’t necessarily something everyone enjoys to work with, however, as many photographers assume that these little reflectors are for background lights only. Personally, I always believe it’s important to revisualize, rework, relearn, and revisit your equipment and what it can do for you, and that piece of equipment has given my style a tremendous amount of pop and control. I really enjoy the little 7-inch reflectors with grids; however, you need quite a lot of them to light an entire scene.

Beauty Dishes

The newest piece of equipment that I have added to my arsenal is the Mola Setti 28-inch Soft White beauty dish. This is, hands down, the go-to piece of equipment I grab 99 percent of the time, and, in fact, most of the photographs you see in this book were shot using it. I just can’t say enough good things about this beauty dish; it’s well-built and worth every penny. Also, by putting a fusion sock on the 28-inch dish, it helps to soften it up a bit, which is nice for close-up shots. A Mola 16-inch beauty dish is exhibited in Figure 6.11. Figure 6.12 shows a Mola 28-inch beauty dish mounted to a dolly.



Figure 6.11: A large, white Mola 16-inch beauty dish with fusion

Light Stands

Light stands are a critical piece of equipment because they hold your livelihood. Think of it as what I like to call “L for L” (Light stand equals Livelihood). Light stands are inexpensive, but your lights are not! If you have a \$2,000 strobe and a \$600 beauty dish and you put it on a \$20 stand, it’s going to fall over and break, and your livelihood is going to go down the drain. So, don’t cheap out on your stands. Your stands need to be heavy duty, high-quality devices. Avenger or Manfrotto Century stands are my favorite, especially on rough terrain. These stands are usually silver and are often used on television and movie sets.



Figure 6.12: A Large 28-inch Mola beauty dish mounted to a dolly with a mini boom and weight bag for balance

Aluminum light stands are a different beast. They are usually black and are about 13 feet tall (see Figure 6.13). Beginners often use these stands because they are cheaper and lighter and good for easy set-ups in the studio. My favorites are the Manfrotto 6095s. They have the capacity to hold an enormous amount of weight but usually don’t weigh as much as Century stands. So, if you fly to Las Vegas to do a fashion shoot, for instance, you can take your case and load it up with about three to four of these and it’ll weigh less than if you took along two Century stands. This way you can get on the airplane without spending your entire budget on baggage fees.



Figure 6.13: Black aluminum stands (left) and silver Century stands (right)

Grip Arms

The difference between capturing a good image versus a fabulous image can come down to your use of *grip arms*. Grip arms can make your work infinitely easier. They help you to shine angles of light on the body. If you simply just stick your light on a stand, you only have a variation of 90 degrees with which to work. Whereas, if you attach your equipment to a grip arm, you have 180 to 360 degrees more control of the variation of light angles, giving you essentially endless possibilities for your lighting angles. I was taught years ago that anytime you buy a new Century stand you go ahead and buy the grip arm to go with it. That way you always have one grip arm per Century stand. Buying a Century stand without the grip arm would be like buying a Ferrari with an empty tank of gas. Figures 6.14 through 6.18 show examples of grip arms.



Figure 6.14: Century stand with grip arm



Figure 6.15: Grip arm with 90-degree elbow



Figure 6.16: Grip arm with pincher clamp. Pincher clamps hold everything: reflector boards, poster boards, foam boards, and so on.



Figure 6.17: Grip arm with a light stud, which is used to attach a strobe. With a light stud you can put the light close to the floor without actually putting it on floor, and position your light at an angle you normally couldn't do.



Figure 6.18: Grip arm with a super clamp. The super clamp has a “v” shape on the bottom, which holds anything that is round such as a pole, light stand, PVC pipe, and so on.

Weight Bags

Weight bags are probably the most overlooked accessory in any photographer’s repertoire. Currently, I have about 12 weight bags in my studio. In my neck of the woods in North Texas, our wind speed on average is right around the 20-mph mark, with gusts around 40 mph. So for me, I would go broke if I couldn’t shoot in high wind. I’ve had to adapt and buy gear for this condition. This has then allowed me to buy the higher-end gear without worry and made it possible for me to shoot pretty much in any situation you throw at me. Weight bags offset your balance and your booms and make sure your stuff doesn’t move. Again, your light stands hold your livelihood, and the weight bag is your security. Think of it as owning a bar without a bouncer. You’re gambling if you’re not using them. Figure 6.19 presents examples of the weight bags I often use.



Figure 6.19

Weight Bag Filler

What you use to fill your weight bags is just as important as using weight bags at all. The last thing you need during a fashion shoot is to set down a weight bag and have a poof of dirt or dust fly into the air sully your models and set. Some examples of clean fillers for your weight bags are the following:

- Steel shot (similar to BBs)
- Playground gravel
- Fish-tank rocks

You can fill them with whatever you want, but the cleaner the material the better. Also, remember to either rent filled weight bags on location or fill the bags at the shoot, dump, and fly back with just the bags; otherwise, you will be lugging a lot of extra, unnecessary weight.

Accessories

There are a lot of accessories a photographer needs to keep on hand in the studio—everything from your normal gear and equipment to Clorox Wipes, to hair dryers for the hair stylists. Here is a rundown of the accessories I find the most useful to have on hand.

Photography Accessories

I keep the following photography accessories on hand in my studio on a cart dolly:

- **Manfrotto Super Clamps.** My favorite accessory is the Manfrotto Super Clamp. They are round metal clamps that literally can hold anything to anything and are designed to grasp round poles such as booms, grip stands, light stands, and so on. They are strong enough to hold actual studio strobes, affording you ability to mount studio strobes to stands. This is really important because, again, you do not want to break your strobes! If you're not mounting them to the top of the stand, they can be clamped to the middle or bottom of the stand depending on the effect you want to achieve. These clamps are essential for that.
- **Brass light stand adapters.** Of course, you need a small bucket of light stand adapters. The aluminum adapters are long and lightweight; however, I like the brass adapters better. They are stronger than aluminum, which is important when you are continually screwing and unscrewing a light into it. You don't want to risk beating the heck out of your light stand adapter every time you do so.
- **Adjustable clamps.** I highly recommend also having on hand the big 3-inch or 4-inch adjustable clamps, which you can get at Home Depot. You need at least 20 to 30 of these. I don't like the clamps made out of plastic with the rotating heads; I prefer the metal ones. The plastic clamps don't have the strength to clamp anything in the background or heavier props, such as a tree branch, so buy the metal ones. I used to buy them in black, but now I buy them in florescent colors, which makes them easier to see. For instance, if you clamped a tree, when you're cleaning up, you can see it and say, "Oh, I forgot that." It's great for visibility. And, additionally, if you're clamping something close to your photo and it ends up in the shot, you'll be able to notice the neon-colored clamp in post-production and be sure to edit it out.
- **Studio sync chords.** Studio sync chords are vital and you'll need to have many on hand. I have a motto: In photography, you can have \$10,000 in studio equipment and gear and it will end up hindered by a \$10 sync chord. Therefore, always have extra synch chords on hand. I carry a range, starting with the short 6-inch chords all the way to the 2-foot variety. They basically attach your radio to strobes or your camera directly to strobes, enabling you to fire

quickly. This is an example of those simple little things that can hinder an entire shoot if you don't have any, so trust me when I recommend that you stash them everywhere.

- **Tripod plates.** Tripod plates are about \$30 each these days, but again, having extra on hand is worth it. Try to always keep one in your bag and a couple on your studio rack. I even have a small mountain biking bag that I attach to the side of my tripod in which I have an allen wrench, an extra plate, and a synch chord, just in case I need to improvise.
- **Tripod dolly.** If you can keep one in your studio, another must have item is a tripod dolly. You can get a big heavy-duty tripod, which keeps the wobble and weight down. It's also steady and allows you to move the tripod around without busting your back by having to pick it up and move it manually. You can also purchase a lighter-weight, every-day dolly that you take out on location.
- **USB cables and adapter wall outlets.** Having many of these on hand is really important, too, because it seems everything today powers up and recharges via USB cables and wall adapter outlets. I also have a collection of USB cables in all different sizes. If I upgrade something, I might throw out the hardware, but I'm always stashing the USB cable somewhere. Also, ensure that you have a few USB cable extension adapters so that you can make an extension, much like an extension power cord, just in case you're shooting tethered or something along those lines.

I find that keeping my accessories on a cart helps me to keep my supplies organized (see Figure 6.20). By keeping them all in one place, I can quickly pack a bag to take on location. If something's on the cart, it's easy to locate, and when I return, I know to put it back on the cart so that I don't misplace anything.



Figure 6.20

In addition to the photography equipment mentioned, I also have various-sized stools for posing (see

Figure 6.21) and plenty of extension cords. The extension cord illustrated in Figure 6.22 is my favorite, and you can purchase it conveniently at Home Depot. It's features a four-plug outlet, and it easily and cleanly wraps up. I take it with me everywhere. You can plug your lights in under your feet and no one trips. It really keeps things organized.



Figure 6.21



Figure 6.22

Other Accessories

I also keep myriad non-photography-related items available on my cart in my studio, as you can see in Figure 6.23. You will want these and no doubt come up with many of your own. Here are some of the things I always keep on hand:



Figure 6.23

- Clorox Wipes or other disinfecting wipes, paper towels, and “Back to Black” auto care wax product. You apply it like a car wax and it makes plastics that are dark in color shiny and super black in appearance. Caranuba car wax is also good for making anything that is metal or reflective shine. It’s an old-school commercial trick. Use the paper towels to apply the wax and the disinfecting wipes for cleanup.
- Small spray bottles that you can get at the beauty supply or drug store. I have three of them. In one bottle I mix one part water with three parts glycerin (the purpose of which I’ll explain in just a few moments). Also, I keep a couple of bottles of pure glycerin on my rack at all times.
- All the tape you can imagine: scotch tape; double-stick tape; body tape; gaffer’s tape; duct tape, in regular silver and in various colors; surveyor’s tape; you name it.
- Carabineers. These are old rock-climbing gear I used to have with me, now I use them in the studio for weight bags on light stands. They are as strong as heck and lightweight and they clip anything together.
- Satin fabric, burlap fabric, rope, twine rope, fishing string, big gym rope (great for good texture), basically anything I might need to add to my photo shoot. These are on the bottom rack of my dolly that I keep on standby, just in case.
- White index cards numbered 1 to 50. These are reference cards good for catalog shots. You can put an index card with a number on it in front of the product, shoot it, then call out that frame 20 is “x” product. This system can help you remember what you shot and the right product name.
- Tools such as screwdrivers and pliers.
- Pushpins, clothespins, pens, pencils, and white sidewalk chalk, which is great for marking where the equipment goes in the event you need to move it between shots. This way your lighting stays consistent. Chalk also comes out of carpet, which is great!

Why Use Glycerin?

You use glycerin for anything you want to look like water droplets. It makes water bead. So, if you're doing a sports image, for example, it will look like sweat on the model's brow. Water will hit the skin and evaporate or it will drip pretty quickly. Glycerin helps the drops stay in place longer before falling, affording you time to get a few shots. You can also use glycerin to put a light mist of water on a glass or soda can to make them looking frosty, or flowers or plants, etc.—basically on anything for which you want water to bead and stay beaded. Start with the initial 1:3 mixture ratio; you can then alter it to your taste depending on how much beading you want.

Dressing Room Accessories

Your hair and makeup artist will have most of these things for your models, but there are some things I keep on hand in the studio dressing room, just in case, such as different shades of foundation, powders, and other cosmetics. I also have commercial hair dryers, curling irons, and flat irons for the stylist to use along with full-length mirrors and makeup lights.

I also keep non-scented lotion and hand sanitizer everywhere. This way, everyone can wash their hands and stay clean and not infect the entire crew if someone is sick.

I also have a cheap hairdryer that I keep in studio as well as take with me on location. A hair dryer helps to move the hair around, and I use it as a fan. Hair dryers used as a fan is one of the coolest little secrets in fashion photography. Models don't typically like real fans blowing on them because for one, fans are cold and can give them goose bumps, which makes for more work in postproduction, and two, the cold air dries out the model's eyes. Soft, warm air is better.



A Well-Stocked Camera Bag

When on location, I make sure the following accessories are with me in my camera bag:

- **Pocket wizards.** Pocket wizards are radio transmitters, also known as radio poppers, which allow me to fire strobes without being tethered to a cable. I have four pocket wizards that I carry with me.
- **Lights, cable lights, and a skyport.** These gadgets fall in with the pocket wizards and radio poppers, enabling me to control my flashes remotely. I like the Elinchrom skyport.
- **Extra lens caps and lens cleaning cloth.** A big microfiber towel is good to keep stuff dusted, and I never know when I might lose one of my lens caps.
- **Extra batteries.** I always keep three extra camera batteries and an extra battery charger in my camera bag. When I upgraded my Nikon years back, I purchased a two-slot battery charger. I used to get the old single-slot charger, but now I keep a chord and a two-slot charger with me at all times. It's saved my booty quite often! Also, I have a entire package of AA batteries, which is an absolute *must-have* shooting accessory to maintain, stashed everywhere.
- **Speed rings.** Speed rings are used to attach softboxes or light modifiers to photo strobes.
- **Compact flash cards.** I have two cases of compact flash cards. Compact flash cards are today's "film."
- **Light meter.** Most important to always have with me is my light meter. I can't shoot without it.

Airplane Security

The best way to keep your cameras and lenses safe while flying to a location shoot is to pack them in a Pelican case. A Pelican case is an extremely hard plastic case that is close to being water tight. You can stand on them and they won't break. The company makes a TSA-certified air travel case that fits into an overhead travel compartment. It also sports wheels so that you can pull it behind you. I never check my cameras and lenses. I always carry them on-board in a Pelican case and keep them near my body at all times. Be sure to arrive at the airport early; TSA agents search camera gear closely because of all the metal components.

Also in my Pelican case is my camera bag with my camera bodies, lenses, accessories as well as my fanny pack. Other items I bring with me on a location shoot include the following:

- **AA batteries.** Again, I can't stress this enough. You never know what might go wrong. Keep batteries stashed in multiple places and always on your body.
- **Mini-medicine cabinet.** The stress and pressure of shooting for both me and my crew and the talent is never to be underestimated. Remember, this is work, people. And this is especially true when your client is on set! Thus, it's good to always have something like Advil or Excedrin at the ready. If you're shooting out on location, you should bring along anything that can help aid with allergies. If you have a headache and you're not in the mood,

your shoot isn't going to go well. It's a good idea to keep your personal supply of a mini medicine cabinet close by.

- **Diffusion materials.** I keep little, left-over pieces of diffusion material that came off of old products and use them over my flashes or lights to soften the light.
- **Large, medium, and small zip ties.** I buy these in various colors. Again, black seems to blend in with light stands and I have been known to rip a cable forgetting that I zip-tied it, so I use colored zip ties that I can easily see.
- **Surveyor's tape.** Hot pink and hot yellow surveyor's tape is good to keep around. This is the plastic tape that surveyors use to mark stakes in the ground. I like to use this type of tape because if I have things dangling in the picture on which I don't want to crack my head open, such as a boom stand, or knock any other important prop or piece of equipment over, I mark it with surveyor's tape in pink or yellow, making it nearly impossible to miss. I make long, streamer-like flags, which alert, the models and the crew, preventing injuries or damaged equipment. I keep this tape with me all the time.
- **USB flash drives.** I bought a bunch of these, because with today's camera systems, you are guaranteed to shoot more than 4GB of storage that your basic CD allows. Because you, like me, will be shooting 64 or 32GB of photos per client, you will need the capacity of a flash drive to contain them all. Also, if an art director needs those images ASAP, flash drives are fast, reusable, and you can put large, high-resolution images on them quickly and pass them off to whomever needs them before leaving the shoot.
- **Money.** I always keep a couple bucks and quarters on me for water or some other drink. I also keep a handful of those little square units, from squareup.com, used to make credit card payments on your phone. This is great to have in the event someone wants to buy a book or schedule a photo session. I have a handful of those, and they are free with your account.

The Fanny Pack

Yes, I own a fanny pack, and it's saved my fanny more times than I can count! Figure 6.25 shows that my fanny pack has belt loops that I actually put my belt through and attach to my waist so when I'm shooting this is literally always on my person. I've been doing this since the first time I started interning. Not only is it sentimental in that regard, it's essential. In this bag I keep a bunch of little things that I tend to need quickly.



Figure 6.25

In this bag, I have five wooden clothespins. These are awesome for clamping down really lightweight materials or anything in which you don't want to rip a hole. I have a small bundle of regular, everyday rubber bands that are about a quarter-inch thick and 2 inches long. I have a box of safety pins that are 1.5 inches tall. I also have a small fishing box to hold tiny safety pins. These pins are great for hiding itty, bitty products or pinning little things, fabric, props, and clothing. I have a boatload of different kinds of bobby pins and hair clips as well as Victoria Secret body tape for models.

I always keep six or more light stand safety adapters in my fanny pack and camera case. I keep them stashed all over because I think they are worth their weight in gold. You can get them at Home Depot. They are like mini clamps and I'd recommend you buy two boxes of them and stick them everywhere. I keep a cheap pair of pliers for working with either real or fake flowers. You can use them to bend and tweak the stems and it's good to have them on hand for the hair/makeup stylists to work with in the event they don't have them. Also, keep a cheap pair of wire cutters to cut stems, etc. Also good to have on standby, especially when on location, are a couple of extra springs for gear. Mostly this relates to the springs in your beauty dishes, which tend to rattle on the airplane and come loose, so it's good to have replacements at the ready. However, you need to go to the manufacturer to get this in their accessories department. I have a few AA batteries, as again, you can't have enough of those, and a pencil, pen, and two black Sharpies. Finally, I also have a white glove to avoid leaving fingerprints on mirrors, mylar, metals, black tiles, or any other shiny object in the shoot that I want to avoid smudging. The fanny pack does weigh a lot, but I don't leave home without it, as is evident in Figure 6.26.



Figure 6.26

Of course, you will find what works for you in your cache of equipment, but if some of these things help you to get started, help you to think of those odd items that saves you time when you are in a jam, or assist you in perfecting your craft, then I'm happy to point them out, as so many before me helped to get me up and running.



CHAPTER 7: Breaking the Rules

As a photographer, there are general photography rules you need to follow, and they are there for a good purpose. Following the rules usually results in good photos. But, just like the speed limit, everyone breaks the rules every now and then. I have witnessed rookie and even intermediate photographers pick apart an image of mine and ask, “Why did you break the rule here?” or, “This rule didn’t apply here, how were you able to get away with it?” Sure, it would be easy for me to quip, “All rules are made to be broken”; however, even if there is some truth to that, there is a method to my madness. I think the best guidance I can offer is a piece of advice I received long ago from an art teacher: If you’re going to break a rule, you’d better break it big. You should break it so big that when someone looks at your photograph, they know the rule you broke, and that you know the rule and that you broke it intentionally.

Now, I can’t guarantee you that breaking the rules is going to work, but if certain elements are in place, go for it. Most of the time you will get a killer shot out of it. It could very well be one of those situations in which you want to get really creative and funky, so you decide to break a rule and you do it huge. It seemed really great in your brain, but then you get it back and it just doesn’t work. It doesn’t work 100 percent of the time, no matter how cool a concept and how great a photographer you are. I’d say it’s more along the lines of 75 percent skill and 25 percent luck that the image works out.

The image shown in Figure 7.1 is an example of breaking some rules in which I lucked out. I needed to capture a beauty shot but wanted to go against the norm. So, I decided to put a pool in the studio—a kiddie-pool more or less, but yes, a pool. I filled it up with water and placed a black background on the bottom. The lighting was the biggest gamble with this idea in that the goal was still to create a beauty shot, which meant the model’s skin needed to be flawless and we couldn’t let it get wet either. My other problem was that water is reflective, so my lights kept showing up, reflecting back at me in the lens. I corrected this by applying some simple physics. The angle of incidence is equal to the angle of reflection, which basically means that the angle going in is the same as the angle reflecting out. So, when I placed my camera, I changed the angle of the lights, bringing them farther and farther away until I could no longer see them. This also created a softer light, which is always nice for beauty shots.



Figure 7.1

After solving the lighting challenge and getting our model perfectly placed, it was time to shoot. Instead of a normal beauty lens such as an 85mm or 105mm, I used a 50mm from a ladder and shot looking directly down on the model. I broke the lens rule and slightly pushed the lighting, but the gamble paid off and the art director chose my image for the job.

Figure 7.2 illustrates another example of a using this pool idea and shooting from above using the same lighting and lens.



Figure 7.2

When to Break a Rule

When are you going to break a rule? For me, the moment I decide to throw caution to the wind and try something is when I know I already have the shots that I absolutely must get. What I mean by this is that when going into a photo shoot, you are given a shot list and direction from the art director or client, and you knock those out first. Even if it's just your own stuff, there will be a punch list you work from. After you've secured those "heroes" and your art director or client says, "It's a wrap. We've got what we wanted," you can spend extra time to go out of your comfort zone and drop a rule. So, for me, I only break the rules when I know I have an image that satisfies the needs of the client. Then, and only then, I can overstep that boundary and get a little bit more creative. However, that having been said, 9 times out of 10, if you get a good shot in those extra 20 minutes when you break a rule and it works, the art director might very well buy that particular shot instead of the one already approved.

If breaking a rule frees you to be more creative as an artist, great, go for it. (See Figure 7.3.) However, you need to make extra sure that the emotion of your subject or the mood you're trying to convey is intact. If breaking the rule contributes to further creating that mood, definitely do it, but just remember to go big, or not at all.



Figure 7.3

How to Break a Rule

If you do choose to break a rule, most of the time it's either going to be a lens rule or a body posing rule. Those are the two most breakable rules; you can push the boundaries on these all you want and still come back with a decent image. You don't usually want to break a lighting rule, however. It's too important that you have your lighting spot-on accurate. Sometimes, you can test different lighting effects, but you don't usually jump off the deep end with your lighting. It's too important and doesn't really make sense. Most of the time, you'll see photographers break a body posing rule like blocking The Box, shifting the weight forward, or leaving hair in the subjects' faces. These types of things tend to be easier to test and push limits and still provide a workable image. Push your lighting rules too far and you might not even be able to see the subjects you were trying to shoot creatively. If you have time at the end of the shoot and want to test different lighting effects, fine, but get the shot the client wants first. If you're just shooting something for yourself, well, by all means, go for it. Experimenting is a great way to learn.

If you're going to break a rule with your camera lens it might be something along the lines of first shooting with a 105mm lens to get a nice, perfect image. You could then switch over to a moderately wide-angle lens, such as a 28mm or 35mm, which wouldn't distort or tear the body up too much, but you use that lens knowing you're going to distort it. You could also go with a 24mm lens or one even wider or a fish eye if you really wanted to distort it. Figure 7.4 illustrates an example of an image I shot with a 24mm lens instead of an 85mm. When I change from a normal lens to a wide-angle lens, I like to drop down to the 24mm. I like the field of view and the slight-to-medium distortion it produces. A fish-eye lens is cool, but it mostly just distorts the image far too much instead of giving it the "art" look I seek.



Figure 7.4

The potential consequence of opening up your field of view is that logically, more will fill your lens, right? So, if you're shooting a model, you will need to see the distortion of all the elements and keep that bend or distortion to only one of the edges. Also, if you are shooting outside on location, objects such as power lines and weeds might become a factor. So, you might have to do some postprocessing work or on-location yard work before you click with the new lens.

If your lens gets wider, your scope will need to widen, as well. Start looking for elements that will now be captured in the photo that were not in your previous images.

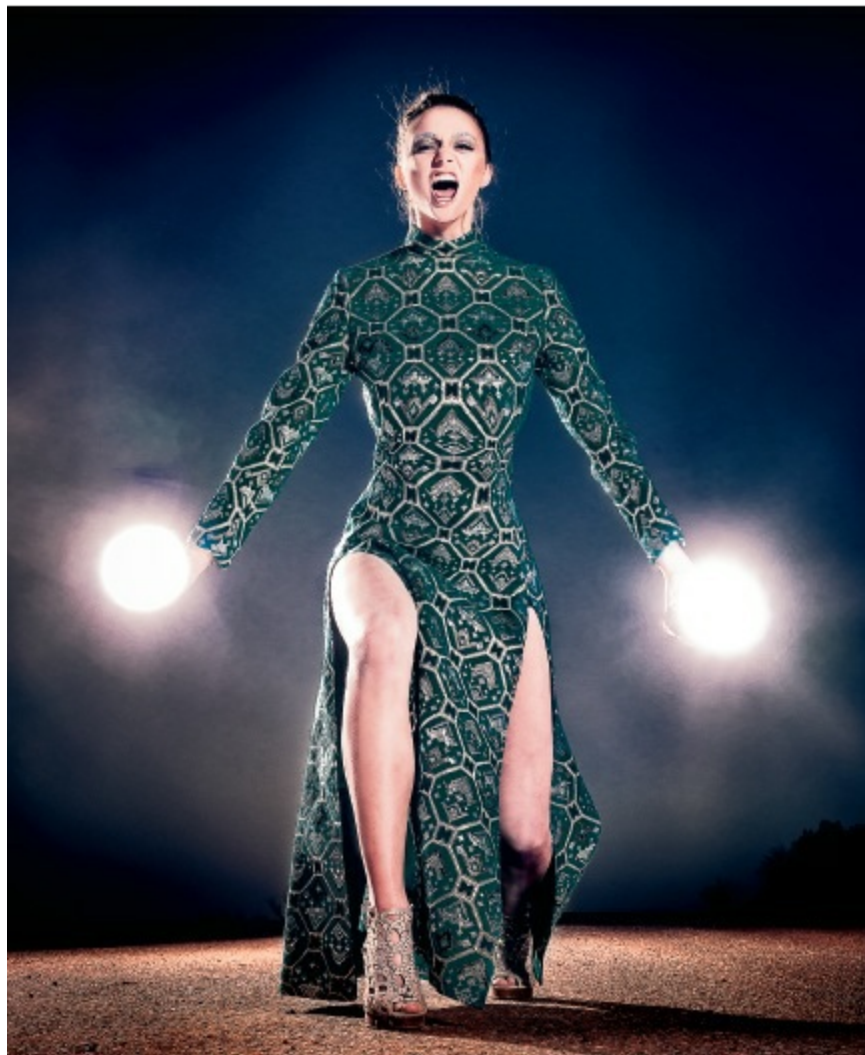
Overall, you can break a body or lens rule, but ensure that your composition, lighting, and design are all following suit. Your image still needs to tell a story, and the reason why you are breaking a rule must be obvious. Even if it's a cool perspective visually, ensure that your design elements are all there, too.

Today with digital images, you don't waste actual film on your experiments, and you can easily just delete images if they don't reproduce the look you had in your head. Again, just be sure that if you do break rules, it is obvious that you meant to do it.

The image that opens this chapter in which our model is leaning against the airstream with her arms crossed is a perfect example of what I'm talking about. In this image the lighting is perfect, the lens choice typical, but I broke a posing rule by crossing her arms and blocking The Box.

Here's the bottom line: Take the photos you are contracted to take, the way you're supposed to take them and ensure that they are technically correct, aesthetically pleasing, and brilliant. Then, if from there you want to push boundaries and break rules, don't break more than one rule at a time when

shooting for a client. If you're going to break a lens rule and choose a different perspective and focal length of lens, take care that your posing is correct. Especially if you *do* choose to break more than one rule, keep your rule breaking to personal art images.



CHAPTER 8: Putting Your Poses to Work

The foundation of my work and the poses I do come directly from the design of the outfit I am featuring in my photographs. The clothing is my first step in determining the direction I will take. I look at the design, style, texture, and fabric of the clothing. All of those components tell me how I need to pose the model to generate a particular mood and convey a particular attitude in the image. The photographs in this chapter showcase some of my personal favorites of this past year, in which I pushed the rules and put all I know to work with some pretty incredible results.

Shea's Florida Formal

My initial vision for the image in Figure 8.1 was to have the model, Shea, wear a formal dress and then have long pieces of fabric catch the wind to create movement. I wanted the dress to appear big and flowy. Instead of destroying a formal dress to get this shot, I made this dress myself from six yards of champagne-colored fabric that I brought with me to the location in Florida. I wrapped it, cut it, and made the belt. Not too bad, eh?



Figure 8.1

I had some additional toile and tied it all in so that Shea could hold the ends of it. I then put a fancy necklace on her, did her hair and make-up, and put her into the freezing water. At one point I thought about laying Shea in the water to see if the fabric could float, but it didn't—it ended up sinking. So, I decided to keep her standing at the edge of the surf.

To achieve this image, I posed Shea essentially in a T-Stance; however, it was hard for her to hold her balance in the waves. Instead, she tried to keep a formal stance as much as possible. With her legs anchoring her, I then placed her hands and arms in various positions while having her grab the ends of the toile so that it would get caught in the wind and be pulled back, creating the flowing movement I was after.

To light the shot, I used the Elinchrom Rangers on full power in a 39-inch Rotalux box. It was held on a boom pole by an assistant who was standing in the water next to Shea. I used a 105mm lens, which is a little longer than what I would normally use, but I didn't want to get into the water and shoot right up on her. Using a slightly longer lens made it possible for me to stay on the beach for the most part and telephoto out to her. I shot at a very low camera angle to elongate her and lend that elegant, bigger-than-life look. I did eventually end up getting wet, though. To achieve this particular shot I had to sit down directly in the surf. I wanted the horizon line low to make it more of a beauty shot.

Susan in the Red Dress

If you are featuring in your photograph a rayon dress that is long, really flowy, and suited for the red carpet, you need to create movement in the dress to really put it on display. Direct a fan toward your model or have someone toss the dress up in the air right before you shoot, or instruct the model to “runway walk” to generate movement in the dress. Otherwise, all of that fabric can look limp and lifeless.

The concept for the image presented in Figure 8.2 of Susan was to have a really big, oversized dress blowing into wind, exploding, and creating a massive shape. I have always had a fondness for the design and shape of tulips, so I wanted to see if I could make the fabric of the dress mimic that shape.



Figure 8.2

Susan was dressed in a wrap dress that I created out of a couple of yards of fabric. The rest of her was covered by another several yards of fabric cut at different lengths and different widths. I then placed two really large fans near her, aiming up at her. I strategically created a lot of longer fabric in the back, so that when we tossed it up in the air, it wouldn't just go up and fall back down; instead, it would go up with the wind of the fan and join the natural wind. It was my hope that this combination of natural and forced wind would take the fabric up all around her and create cool and funky patterns. (I think I can see a tulip shape in at least a couple of the images shown in Figures 8.2, 8.3, and 8.4.)



Figure 8.3



Figure 8.4

To light the shot, I used a 28-inch Mola beauty dish with no diffusion material and set it in pretty close to Susan at full power to override the sun. Behind Susan are two strobes set out of frame, causing the light to shine through the red material slightly and add fill light. The strobes are at the bottom on the left and another strobe is behind her on the right. The other strobe on the left is set farther back; its purpose is only to light the fabric that blows in the distance. There's really only four studio strobes lighting this scene, as evidenced by the shadows that you can see on the ground. Of course, the sun overhead played a factor, adding to the beautifully lit blue sky.

I used a 17mm-35mm telephoto lens, so the focal length was somewhere in that range. By using a wide angle, I distorted the wave effect by making it look bigger than it actually is. To get the angle I was after, I laid on my stomach and held the camera about 4 to 5 inches off the ground.

Shea in a Parachute Dress

Looking at Figure 8.5, I still find it hard to believe that I actually pulled this shot off. If you only *knew* all of the hours of preparation and elements I had to fight to get this unbelievable shot!



Figure 8.5

Here's how it went down. I spent over two-and-a-half hours designing and playing with just the dress. There were so many options for of how the dress could look, making for a very difficult decision. I made the bodice out of wedding dress liner and then cut it really short on the bottom to create a mini dress with a sleeveless top. Next, I wrapped Shea very tightly with the fabric so that you couldn't see through it and then pinned it all up in the back with safety pins. I bought three, 5-foot military parachutes. Two of them I stuck into a bucket and dyed them black. The black parachutes were added to the left and right side of the dress, flanking Shea with black fabric.

Initially, I thought the wind was going to pick up the black flanking material more, but the more I played with the dress, the more I liked just utilizing the black primarily for the dress, keeping it tighter to the body with the white bodice. Then, with a bunch of white left-over wedding liner, I attached the rest of that fabric to the boat to create essentially a sail. I wanted the sail to be up in the air, much like a real one, but when looking at the test shots, I realized that the fabric blended in too much with her dress, and it just looked bad. However, because the wind was catching the wedding liner fabric really well, I decided to pull it off to the dead side of the photograph to give more of a design line. I stuck three weight bags on the material to ground it to the sand.

Now, what to do with the 5-foot parachute in front of her? Shea tried to hold it in front of her, but this soon proved futile as she quickly ended up fighting the, with the parachute essentially pulling her off the boat. During that little skirmish, I lost her pose, her hair—everything! Shea's hair had been styled in an elegant-looking up-do, but when the wind kicked up, it blew her hair all over her face.

This is when you learn to “roll with it” and punt.

Because Shea's hair was all over the place, I decided to give her more of a slicked-back ponytail look. I used the black of her hair to compliment the black of her dress and then darkened up her makeup to give her a more of a fierce, intense look. With this look, I then changed her pose to more of

an aggressive one, as opposed to the elegant pose I initially sought. My crew and I laughed about this change of course, having her now in essentially a “fighting pose,” which fit so well given that she was already fighting the wind. Coming to this compromise solved a lot of the frustration I was dealing with, and after I changed course and went with it, it was smooth sailing! (Pun intended.) When the parachute lifted into the wind, it created a seriously fabulous and very strong photograph.

Finding the boat for the shoot has an interesting backstory, as well. You really just never know where and when your props might appear! I was doing a routine family photo for a good friend of mine on their ranch. The shoot went well and as I was loading my gear into my car and was about to leave when I happened to notice this old wooden row boat. Immediately I thought, “Yep! We’re going to use *that* boat for the Shea / parachute dress shoot.” And as it turned out, it was this boat that pulled the shoot together and eased our fears of it looking too much like a pirate photo.

Of course, to use the boat as a prop in that photo, I had to haul it, which proved very difficult. It took five people and was not easy, because it was old, wobbly, and falling apart. But, we managed to get it moved into position. We all just fell in love with the boat, even though it created so much more work for us. I had originally planned on shooting it at a certain angle, but after we positioned the boat, I reconfigured the angle and we had to move it again to fit that angle. Did I mention that it took us half a day to get everything into place?

I shot this image with my brand new Sigma 35mm, f/1.4 lens. As far as lighting goes, I photographed Shea facing north as much as I could so that I could get a rich, deep-blue sky behind her. I had the Mola 28-inch beauty dish on a stand with serious weight bags at the base to keep it steady and positioned it about two-and-a-half feet away from Shea.

M’Kaylee Floats

I shot this image of M’Kaylee presented in Figure 8.6 in an old inn built in the 1920s, and I think this location really lent itself to helping me achieve the goal of creating a surreal, perhaps even ghostly, image. I intended to really push myself out of my comfort zone from my typical work. I do a lot of work in the city and in locations for which I have a great deal of equipment to rely on to help me secure the shot I want. I’ve become so addicted to using my gear, that sometimes I forget to try just using less and going with what’s happening naturally at the time.



Figure 8.6

“M’Kaylee Floats” was an experimental project I did during which I forced myself to use just the bare bones. I had a Nikon 50mm lens and a tripod. That’s it. No lighting, no other lenses or gear, not even an AA battery! I found that the shooting part was fairly simple, but the metering part proved to be difficult because there was such a considerable contrast between the lighting inside and outside. The light in this image is just simply the natural available light, as seen from the outside around the wall and shining in.

I took an ambient meter reading directly in front of M’Kaylee. Usually I’d take the meter and aim it toward the light source, but when I did that for this image, the outside was perfect but the inside was horrible. And if I just metered the inside, M’Kaylee ended up being more of a silhouette. So, what I ended up doing was aiming the meter on the shadow part of her and using the reflective meter. With the reflective metering attachment, I shot a meter reading from the sternum area of her chest while she stood in the window. That gave me the reading that worked.

However, even though I then had my meter reading nailed down, after a few tries I still wasn’t getting what I wanted because I was too concerned about the wind blowing her hair in her face. It was really windy because a storm was rolling in. In the midst of my shooting M’Kaylee in those initial takes, I got a weird shot off by accident in which the wind blew her hair in her face. After seeing it, I surprised myself and realized how much *better* I liked having her hair all messed up in her face. I think it made her look more like a human figure and less of a human model or subject. The hair in her face kind of dehumanized her a little bit. Looking at the image we all know it’s a girl, but we don’t recognize *who* she is by hiding her face. So, after that I let the wind continue to blow her hair and dress, and I realized it was actually a blessing instead of curse; it was exactly what I needed. Again, another good lesson for me in “going with it” instead of fighting it.

Everyone asks me if I used Adobe Photoshop to modify the image and make it appear as if M’Kaylee were floating. I didn’t. I used a wide aperture and a really fast shutter speed. She was simply

standing on the tippy toe of her left foot, on the top stair. Then, it was a simple 1, 2, 3, hop. She hopped off her tippy toes, so she didn't actually get that high, but it gave her just that little bit of air beneath her feet. Her hands are hanging out there for balance, and it just ended up looking pretty cool. So again, the project was to shoot something surreal by using *only* a camera lens and a tripod, and I just lucked out, given the natural elements at play.

Paige in Bloom

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the pose you choose usually comes from the dress or outfit as well as the materials and texture of the fabrics. If you're going to be a fashion photographer, it is critical to have a passion for clothing and the design of those garments. You need to focus on them and not just the pretty face. That's the difference between fashion work and regular photography work. If you don't have that passion, you might not get any work or get into the industry at all. Even if you have a few gigs, you won't move up and last without that key *passion for fashion*. Here's another tip: know your designers. They spend a great deal of time on their branding, and you have to be consistent with the image they've created.

In fashion work, you can break some rules here and there if your job allows it—and that's a big if! Stick to most of the rules described in this book unless you are doing more of an editorial-type of shoot. If it is more editorial in nature, you have freedom here to break some rules and go avant garde. You'll usually have an art director on set who already has something kind of bizarre or cool in mind anyway and will direct you as such.

Figure 8.7 shows our model Paige cloaked in flowers. It was shot for the owner of a flower shop who wanted a stand-out image for a trade show. We decided to use red roses rather than pink, for example, because red is a powerful color. Coupled with Paige's neutral skin tone I was able to create a very dramatic feel. Going with pink flowers would have produced a softer look than what we were going for.



Figure 8.7

Kim, my hair and makeup person, got the flowers from the shop and bought some additional synthetic ones. We used spearment gum and skin glue to glue the flowers down so that Paige could move around without exposing herself. We started to make a curved pattern that went across her chest and around her back shoulder and neck, and then we attached the flowers behind her neck and ear. Kim created a custom lipstick color, mixing two dark reds, to get as close as she could to the color of the flowers. Then, I used Photoshop in postproduction to fine-tune the color to match the flowers exactly. To light the shot, I used hard light with soft light in the back. The background is a *cyclorama* wall, which is naturally white; however, when white is under exposed it takes on a blueish tint, which I really like. I used a 7-inch reflector, or can, with a grid as my main light, and I used a snoot in the back to put a spotlight on her neck as well as the background wall for better background light. I shot the image using a 105mm lens while Paige stood and I sat on a black stool. For this shot, I needed to do close-up work. By sitting, I still shot up at her, but not to the degree of lying on the floor. I also shot tethered, which was cool because Paige could see herself on the monitor as I shot, which allowed her to relax by understanding the look and feel I was after.

Kung Fu Emma

The opening shot of this chapter is what I call “Kung Fu Emma.” It is one of my favorite images among those that I shot in 2013 and it will probably be one of my favorite images ever. This is the story behind this image.

When you are in the process of building your portfolio, you won’t always shoot for a client; rather, you might simply want to shoot some cool stuff for yourself. You will eventually team up with an art director, stylist, hair and makeup person, and so on, and these people will be your go-to creative team.

So, on an outing to prepare for one of these *spec shoots*, my team and I went to the thrift store to find clothes and other old things to use. While we were there, I found the dress that our model Emma is wearing in this shot. Now, when I found it, it looked nothing like how it appears in this shot. It didn’t have the slits and looked more or less like a flat tent skirt. It wasn’t form fitting or had any real shape at all, to be honest. But, it had the cool texture and fabric and I really liked the long sleeves, collar, and its length. My art director thought I was nuts and told me to put it back, but I was digging on it too much and bought it anyway. I think I spent a whopping \$3.00!

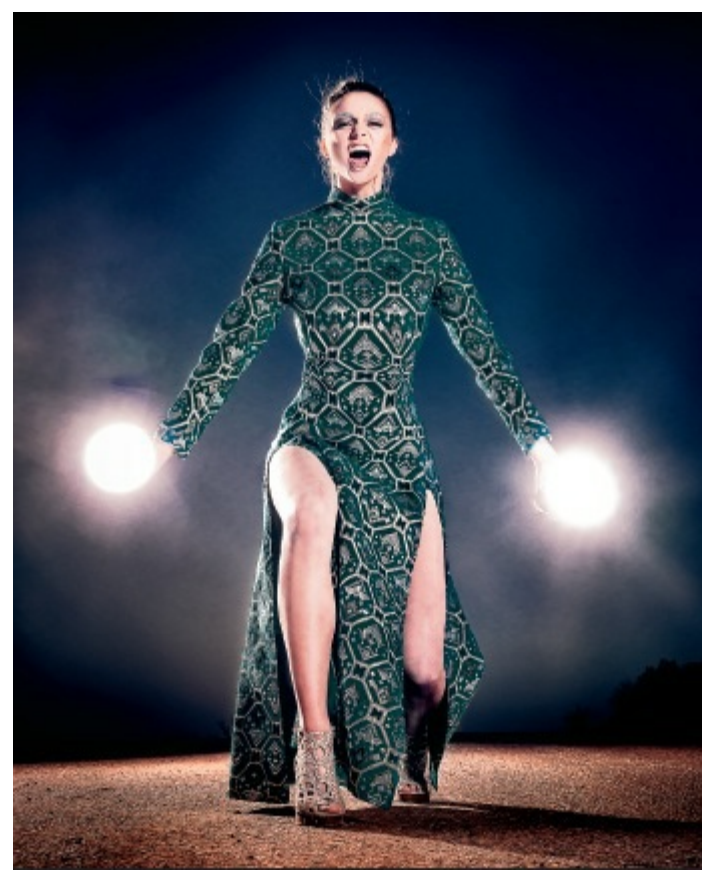


Figure 8.8

When Emma came in for the prefitting for some other items, we fit her for this dress, as well. When she put it on, it became apparent to all of us that it conveyed a very oriental look and feel. Someone wanted to do a Geisha-type of a look with it, but in my opinion, the Geisha thing has been overdone, and that idea didn't thrill me one bit. However, I liked the Orient idea. The art director thought it also looked very 1960s and suggested maybe we go in the direction of a "hippie" type of feel with it. It didn't think it felt very hippie-esque, at least in so much as what I think of as "hippie." So, I was back to playing with the oriental feel combined with the essence of the '60s, and I don't know why, but the idea of Bruce Lee popped into my head. Not too surprising as I have a martial arts background, but I thought some sort of fighting stance might be cool, different, and yet elegant.

However, remember, the dress was horrible in its original state. So, while Emma was being fitted for it, we found the natural seams on the front of the dress and cut the stitching up her legs to form slits. This also freed her legs to move about. Additionally, and very importantly, it gave us the chance to accentuate her long legs and use them to our advantage. At that point, we had the bottom half of the dress dialed in but the top half was awful, so we pulled it in and clamped it up really tight on her so that it was very fitted around her waist and torso. Now, we had a cool dress that fit her well and a martial arts theme but still no clear concept defined.

What happens next is a great example of how when you get cranking with an initial idea in mind, the creative process kicks in and all kinds of ideas surface. We have an oriental dress and an oriental theme, and we're trying to add some Bruce Lee aspect to it. It was then that somebody on the set said, "She looks like a comic-book superhero!" I thought that was really awesome. "Wow! How do we make that happen?" I said to myself. I began thinking and looking around at what we had on set and in my gear bag.

I had the Elinchrom Rangers near by that I use all the time for lighting, so I took the belt off my waist

and put the power pack on the belt and then figured out a way to put the power pack onto the back of Emma's dress. I thought it was genius, but the bulkiness of the power pack ended up making her look really fat, and we couldn't hide it. Emma had on spandex shorts under the dress and was wearing a sports bra, so we took the dress off and secured the power pack to Emma's back utilizing her bra and the belt. Next, because the lights were cabled and not wireless, we ran the cables up her sleeves, and she held on to them as we very carefully put the dress back on. The dress hid the cables and power pack and she didn't look fat. We then hooked up a radio transmitter to the power pack up underneath her dress. These lights are naturally round and very small, so she was able to hold them in the palm of her hands. This is also why we shot her square to the camera, so we could hide her behind the power pack. This broke the rule of posing women square to the camera, but we had little choice.

Next, we had to figure out how to light Emma. For the main lights, we used the big 800-watt strobes and the 28-inch Mola beauty dish without any diffusers and aimed them directly at her. We then back-lit her a bit, coming in at a diagonal. I turned the power pack under her dress to the absolute lowest power possible so that as the Rangers shot directly into the camera they didn't give any color, lens flare, or distortion. And, because they are on the same radio transmitter as the main lights, when I hit the button on my camera, *all* lights fired at the same time, including the lights in her hands. Now we're rockin'!

I attached my 105mm lens, laid down on my stomach so that I could shoot up at her to further emphasize her "superhero-ness," and cranked out an tremendous amount of martial arts poses. It took us some time, however, to figure out how to use the lights in her hands. The hardest part was trying to keep Emma's palms equal in height and flatness because if one of Emma's hand's was flat and the other was at even a slight angle, the light in the angled hand turned out very oval-shaped in the shot. So, in the flat hand, we would end up with the correct round-shaped light but then the other would have an oval-shaped light. This was difficult and took many test runs, but as soon as we showed Emma how to keep her palms flat to the camera, we were able to get our shot.

We got her in a big, powerful martial-arts stance, showing off her legs in this superhero "hero shot!" And, it all came about from an awesome idea that someone threw out there. This is what happens when you are open to ideas and work together as a team. It's not just you and your ideas or the art director's vision. When you get with your creative team, everybody should be able to throw out concepts and everyone should take those ideas seriously. Collaboratively, we came up with this killer idea and shot. That's why you have a creative team around you. My advice is to use them to help you and be open to suggestions. If I were a close-minded type of photographer and held the attitude of, "I'm the boss, and this is how I want this image to be," Kung Fu Emma probably wouldn't have ever happened. The moral of the story is, be a team player!

Paige's Las Vegas Airstream

In closing, I am sure by now you have taken note that the main theme of this book has been about ensuring your pose conveys a certain mood. I can't emphasize the importance of this enough. If you don't have mood or feeling in your photos, put your camera down and pick up another hobby or career path. Your photographs must have mood and feeling. It's everything. The shot of Paige with the vintage airstream and truck behind her that you can see in Figure 8.9 demonstrates this perfectly. It's

one of my best examples depicting how critical it is to imbue mood into your photograph.



Figure 8.9

“How do I get my sales up?” is a question that I’m asked all the time by fellow photographers, especially in workshops. Well, the answer is, if your images are subpar because there is no feeling or mood in them, you are not going to sell many photographs. If you’re shooting a pretty face in nice, green grass and you’re expecting her to instantly have emotion because maybe she’s your wife or daughter, you’re going to be disappointed. Even when shooting people you know, that connection doesn’t necessarily come through in your photograph. Whether she’s a model or average person, just because she’s attractive and might even have a nice outfit on, if you can’t set the stage and evoke emotion from that photo, forget it. It’s much like a painting. When the viewer looks at it, what emotion does the *viewer* feel? That’s how you know you nailed it.

If a stranger walks into a house and sees one of my images, I want that image to pop off the wall to him because he is reading the feeling and making a connection. His eyes are attracted because of the design element, but the heart is also attracted because of the mood that is conveyed. The lack of mood in photographs is my biggest pet peeve because so common in a lot of photography out there today.

As you can see in my portfolio images that I selected for this final chapter, each captures a specific mood and feeling and that was dictated by the design of the outfit, by the creative direction we had in mind going in, and what it morphed into when we had to punt. You really need to stay flexible and work with your team to be a successful photographer. It is my every hope that you learned some tips, techniques, and applicable theory in this book but that the main thing you take away is knowing how to evoke that feeling in your photos, because that is what’s going to sell, get you hired back, and relate to your viewer.

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